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SEPT. 27, 1938

FIFTEEN CENTS

New MASSES

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Between Ourselves

THIS issue is printed on special, coated stock because our regular paper could not be delivered to the print shop owing to the truck strike in New York City. The financial risk entailed by the extra expense was taken by us in view of the absolute necessity of appearing in this critical week when peace hangs in the balance.

In next week's issue we will publish an article by Upton Sinclair on the possibilities of peace. We have also asked Earl Browder to comment on this article. In the same issue Obed Brooks, who recently visited Cuba, contributes an article on new political developments in that country which have resulted in important gains for the forces of democracy.

In connection with the NEW MASSES "I Like America Drive" for twenty thousand new subscribers, A. B. Magil, NEW MASSES editor, Communist candidate for Congress, and co-author with Henry Stevens of the recently published book, *The Peril of Fascism: The Crisis of American Democracy,* will make a series of addresses during the course of a speaking tour which begins on October 5. Magil will speak on "The Crisis of American Democracy." Friends of NEW MASSES in the various cities where these meetings are held are urged to bring their friends and enroll them as NEW MASSES subscribers. Magil will speak in Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Chicago, Cleveland, and Washington, D. C. The dates will be found on page 30 of this issue. The tour, which is under the auspices of NEW MASSES and National Associated Bookshops, will also give Magil an opportunity to gather first-hand information for a series of articles on the political situation in the states visited, which articles will appear in early issues of NEW MASSES.

Martha Graham has herself written the script for *American Document,* the dance drama to be presented at Carnegie Hall Sunday evening, October 9, under the auspices of NEW MASSES. Making use of historic documents and headlines of today, Miss Graham has knit the words into the same rhythm as the movement of the dance. She has used quotations from the Declaration of Independence, from *Lament for the Land* by the Indian Red Jacket of the Seneca tribe, and from Sermons of Jonathan Edwards running as counterpoint to the Solomon *Song of Songs.* This combination of words and movement is presented in colorful theatrical terms.

Dance lovers in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D. C., New Haven, Conn., and Boston will be glad to learn that, following the Broadway dance debut of Anna Sokolow which NEW MASSES sponsored last November, so many requests were received from out of town that we have decided to tour both Miss Sokolow and Mordecai Bauman, well known baritone, in the cities listed above. Miss Sokolow and Mr. Bauman will give a joint recital of their most popular works. Alex North, whose music for the films, *Heart of Spain, China Strikes Back,* and *People of the Cumberland,* was acclaimed by critics, will act as musical director. The tour will take place in November and December, the exact dates to be announced later. For details, please communicate with Tiba Garlin at NEW MASSES, 31 E. 27th St., New York City.

Will the author of the poem, "Madison Square, Union Square, Etc. Square," submitted for publication in NEW MASSES, please step forward and tell us his name? We are eager to publish the poem, but it lacks a signature. The first line of the verse reads: "Asphalt oases in captivity."

Rockwell Kent, William Gropper, Jay Allen, and other artists and writers will hold a dedicatory meeting this Friday night at the Roosevelt Theatre, when it reopens with the Soviet documentary film, *If War Comes Tomorrow.* The purpose of the meeting is to help launch the theater's policy of 100 percent anti-fascism. Only films from democratic nations are to be presented at the Roosevelt, and those chiefly from the Soviet Union. The theater is located at Second Ave. and Houston St., New York City.

THIS WEEK

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Two weeks' notice is required for change of address. Notification direct to us rather than to the post office will give the best results.

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Who's Who

F. C. WEISKOPF is editor of the *Volks-Illustrierte,* a leading German paper published in Prague, and a novelist. . . . Roger Chase was formerly editor-in-chief of the Columbia University *Spectator.* . . . Marc Frank is NEW MASSES correspondent in Mexico. . . . Joseph Starobin has written other articles for NEW MASSES besides the series on the little business man which ends in this issue. . . . Harry Thornton Moore, who has contributed to magazines in England and this country, is writing a novel about the English Civil War. . . . Clarence Weinstock has had several book reviews published in NEW MASSES. . . . Christina Stead's most recently published novel is *House of All Nations.* . . . Charles Recht is a well known New York lawyer. . . . Edwin Berry Burgum is a member of the New York University English department. . . . The appearance of Herman Spector's poem in this issue marks the return of an old contributor to our pages. . . . Don Gordon's poetry has frequently appeared in NEW MASSES.

Flashbacks

"HAVING obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies of both capitals (Moscow and Petrograd), the Bolsheviks can and must take power into their own hands," began Lenin, *writing to the Central Committee* of his party on September 25, 1917. "History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now. No apparatus? There is an apparatus: the Soviets and democratic organizations."... Returning to the same theme on the following day, Lenin wrote: "To be successful, the uprising must be based not on a conspiracy, not on a party, but on the advanced class. . . . It must be based on the *crucial point* in the history of the maturing Revolution, when the activity of the vanguard of the people is at its height, when the *vacillations* in the ranks of the enemies, and *in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted, undecided friends of the Revolution are at their highest point.*" . . . In Italy, just when the world expected a social revolution, vacillations in the ranks of working-class leaders became all too apparent. On Sept. 24, 1920, right-wing Socialist leaders prevailed on metal workers who were in control of the factories to accept a compromise agreement. Writing of this a few days later the executive committee of the Communist International noted: "In Italy there exist all the necessary conditions for a victorious revolution except one—a good working-class organization." . . . The great steel strike which brought out 365,000 men began Sept. 22, 1919, with William Z. Foster at its head.

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Stop the Sell-Out!

The Betrayal of Czechoslovakia Brings War Closer Home

EARL BROWDER

CHAMBERLAIN has come into the open as the accomplice of Hitler. By covering his crime with the melodramatic flight to Berchtesgaden under the cry of "peace," he expects to dragoon British labor into support of his treason, and to smash the Popular Front in France, an aim long close to his heart. Fanatically pursuing the narrowest class interests of British monopoly capital, Chamberlain and his associatcs are striking at the heart of the last hopes of world peace and democracy. It is the blackest and most open treason ever registered in modern history. Through the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, world peace and democracy are to be betrayed.

A storm of protest must and will arise from all the world. From every peace-loving people must come the repudiation of this cynical treachery. Especially from the American people, who hold the greatest power to influence world events, and who have the most advantageous position to influence events for peace without immediate risks to themselves. It is the height of demagogy to cry out against the crimes of other lands if we of the United States should be influenced by those Pharisees who preach at us to pass by on the other side.

The Hitler aggression against the Czechoslovakian republic is one of the sharp points of universal aggression, directed against the whole world. Not least is it against the United States. The wild uprisings staged in the last months by Hitler's forces in Mexico, in Brazil, and in Chile are only slight indications of what is to come when Hitler gets into his stride. The idiotic ravings of the Dies committee show how high within our own government do Hitler's direct acccmplices reach. And for years, one of the principal problems of our Commerce and State Departments has been how to cope with the measures of economic war being waged by Hitler against the United States, in the form of trade practices directly contrary to every established policy of the United States and of every other democratic country.

It is time that the policy of surrender to fascism, of which Chamberlain gives the most dastardly example, be stopped all down the line, in big and little things. The United States should and must establish its own independent initiative to this end, not only from motives of human solidarity, but even from its most selfish national interests.

What are the minimum measures for implementing an American policy for peace in the present moment?

Two steps by Washington would decisively change the atmosphere of panic engendered by the accomplices of Hitler. They are minimum steps, they do not solve the problems, they are carefully buttressed in established American traditions, principles, and legislation—but they have the merit of posing a more realistic estimate of the relation of forces in the world, and show that democracy still has teeth short of war. These two measures would be:

First, a declaration by the President that the United States, vitally interested in international order and peace, is prepared to discuss with all signatories of the Kellogg pact those common measures which will become necessary to realize the aims of that solemn treaty if the present disturbances between nations continue.

J. Bartlett

Second, a declaration by the President, under the authorization of Section 338 of the Tariff Act, that the economic aggressions by Germany, foreseen by that act, have increased and become an established system, which can only be countered by the United States by applying the full measure provided in the act—that is, by embargo on German trade with the United States.

For several years now, the spokesmen of the United States have been reading excellent moral lessons to the aggressors who drag the world to war. More and more, the response to these moral rebukes has come in the form of jeers and insults. Nothing more is to be gained by high-sounding words; they will contribute nothing to world peace, and will only dissipate our country's prestige and moral weight. The next word must be such as will carry weight—or it had better not be spoken. Mild words, but such as convey a businesslike determination toward peace, backed up by even a minimum of action, are worth a volume of the most brilliant generalities. We propose nothing more than that at this moment, when the fate of world peace is in the balance, because we are convinced even this small contribution—because it passes from words to deeds—might easily make all the difference between maintenance of what peace is left in the world and universal slaughter and catastrophe.

Hitler and all his helpers have set the world stage to place before the peace-loving majority of the world the alternative: Surrender or War!

They want the world to believe that the struggle for democracy and peace has come to an end, that it is hopeless, that the war-makers hold all the trump cards.

That is a typical fascist lie, a lie on the grand scale, the lie to suck out the fighting spirit from the democracies, to sap their morale, to spread defeatism among the masses of the peoples.

The fight for peace is only beginning.

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A. Birnbaum

GET IT?

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British labor is already shaking itself free from the shackles of Sir Walter Citrine and Chamberlain. British labor moves very slowly, it is not easily provoked to action, but there is every indication that it is stirred to its depths by Chamberlain's attempted treason. And when British labor begins to move, it is a mighty collossus which can sweep away Chamberlain's power overnight. Let Chamberlain consult Winston Churchill on this point—that same Churchill who cracked his shins on Labor's Councils of Action in 1920, when he tried to use British power to restore the old order in Russia.

French labor, which has already been given a little foretaste of what a future of following Chamberlain has in store for it, has not agreed with Daladier to surrender the future of all France as well as the future of French labor to the ukase from Berchtesgaden.

And America has not yet spoken its final word. It will be a grievous mistake for the warmakers to think that the hesitation of America to speak that word arises from any doubts as to what kind of word it is to be. It will be an even more grievous mistake to conclude that the people of the United States are becoming pacifists willing to surrender democracy and peace to the world bandits. The fate of the world cannot be decided without the United States. And the United States is on the side of democracy and peace.

Let there be no mistake about this. Let the voice of America be heard, the voice of labor and of the people, first of all in our national councils in Washington, in meetings, and in the press, and on the streets.

Let there be a mighty roar of protest against the treason of Chamberlain.

Let there be bold but coldly cautious counsels pressed upon our national spokesmen in Washington!

Let there be full knowledge given the world, that America will never surrender to world fascism, that America is ready to help the world stop its surrender to fascism!

War can still be stopped. Peace can still be saved! Democracy can still be preserved! But the hour is growing short.

The people of America must speak!

★

They're Not All Nazis

As a Sudeten German, I have a right to say something about the situation in Czechoslovakia. Five weeks ago I paid a visit to my parents in the Sudeten section. I found that they are glad to live in democratic Czechoslovakia, as are all law-abiding Sudeten Germans. I was told by the Henlein party there that if I didn't join them I never would be able to go back to Czechoslovakia again. We true democrats, Catholics and Sudetens, will never be united with the Third Reich. We are Germans, but still Czechoslovakian citizens. I say, "God save Czechoslovakia and its President, Eduard Benes."—Max Krause, *in a letter to the New York "Daily News."*

Washington Looks at War

Problems, Plans, and Persons in our Foreign Policy

THEODORE DRAPER

Washington, D. C., September 18.

If war in Central Europe should break out tomorrow, this country's foreign relations would be caught in an embarrassing transitional position. We are moving away from one policy and we have not yet adopted another. As a result, the subject is riddled with inconsistencies. The President, who is directly responsible for the conduct of foreign relations, distrusts and dislikes the neutrality legislation of the past three years. He would change it drastically if he could. In his favor, public opinion in the main is no longer isolationist, as it was from 1935 to 1937. There is agreement here that the idea of isolation as a guarantee of peace is largely a thing of the past though no unanimity about a positive substitute may have arrived. When the two basic factors in the operation of any foreign policy—administration and public sentiment—are so out of line with existing legislation, some change is practically certain.

Until the menace of immediate war during the past week, two possible formulas for revision of the Neutrality Act were seriously considered. Neither involved explicit distinction between aggressor and victim. It is well to supply this background, though neither will be enough even from the administration standpoint if war does break out.

According to the third and last piece of neutrality legislation, passed in May 1937, the President can exercise discretion in two ways. He has to "find that there exists a state of war" before prohibiting the export of "arms, ammunitions, or implements of war" to belligerents. But he need not "find" the state of war if he does not so choose, or at least there is no power to force him to find it. By this simple expedient—the discretion inherent in the word "find"—he can delay or prevent the operation of the act. Secondly, the President can add non-military products to the embargo if he thinks it advisable.

But the act is mandatory in one respect. If the President does find a state of war, then he must embargo "arms, ammunition, or implements of war" to both sides, no matter whether one is the aggressor and the other is the victim. When this lack of moral and political discrimination aids the aggressor (as it must do always), this country necessarily becomes a partner in the crime. Obviously, only in rare cases can the President judiciously fail to find a state of war, as he has done in the Far East; even so, no positive solution is thereby contributed. The Far Eastern precedent would probably not work in a general European war.

One formula was worked out on the basis of such reasoning. Let the President have complete discretion over every provision of the act and, in this way, hold the door open to some type of concerted action against the aggressor if warranted at the time by the state of public opinion. High officials in the State Department tell correspondents, as one told me, that it might not be bad to keep other powers guessing, that the present act is bad because it "binds the President's hands," that the present act is too rigid when the foreign scene changes every day, and so on. It is doubtful, in my mind, whether the President intended to ask for discretion in applying the act to the aggressor alone rather than to all belligerents. Such a request would force precisely that debate on principle which this formula seeks to avoid.

The second possibility was somewhat more courageous. This country has treaty agreements with various powers bearing on peace and war. Outstanding among these is the Nine Power Treaty, dealing with peace in the Far East, signed in Washington in 1922. Another is the Pact of Paris, signed by sixty nations to outlaw war as a national policy, of which one of the initiators was the then Secretary of State Kellogg. The hierarchy at the State Department has little affection for the Pact of Paris, probably because all the aggressors signed it. So the proposal has been made to cut off economic relations with all countries which break a treaty agreement with us *other than the Pact of Paris.*

These two plans were the favorite revisions of the Neutrality Act, at least until last week's crisis in Europe. As I see it, either would be a substantial improvement over the existing law, though both have some very serious weaknesses.

The idea of giving the President "more discretion" is plausible but it does not, of itself, come to grips with any question of principle except by indirection. If the President exercises his discretion consistent with his public declarations against the aggressors, the result would be sheer gain compared with the present mandatory neutrality on arms. But there is some danger in placing the issue on technical rather than political grounds, even as a matter of practical politics. The tory axis in the Republican and Democratic parties may very well decide to oppose the President on foreign policy with the same, single strategy: Beat Roosevelt. Of course there is no comparable unity within this bloc on foreign af-

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fairs as on domestic issues. But the main strategy may carry through; well informed people here think it will. If so, the tories would continue to smear Mr. Roosevelt as a "dictator," this time because he wants more discretion in conducting our foreign relations. A certain amount of confusion would result unless the technical question were given a broader political framework. This "discretionary" formula resembles that used by the administration on the Supreme Court issue.

The availability of the second plan has somewhat receded in the last week. If adopted, its usefulness would be limited to the Far East unless the Pact of Paris were specifically included. With the pact, this formula is all that could be desired by advocates of concerted action for peace. Without the pact, it would be an evasion of the European crisis, the main issue now. It should be noted that neither of these two proposed changes in the Neutrality Act exclude each other.

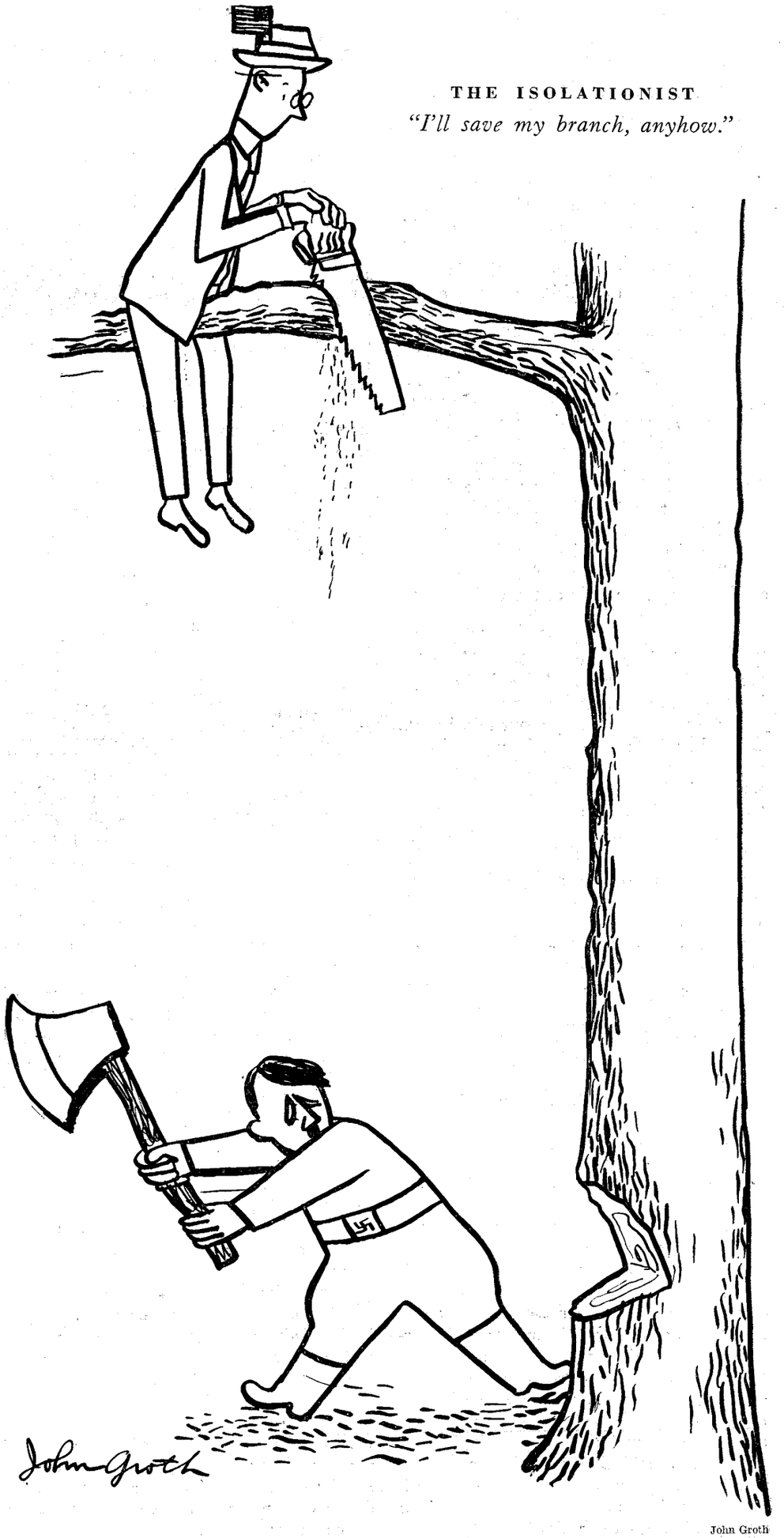
This, then, was the state of mind within the administration until last week when the danger of immediate war made these plans seem somewhat hazy. President Roosevelt canceled his Friday press conference because he did not want to be asked about Europe and Mr. Hull temporarily forgot about his new Mexican obsession. The administration counted on more time to revise the Neutrality Act than Hitler's offensive against Czechoslovakia permitted. The attitude now is to watch and to await the outcome of the Czech crisis rather than to take positive steps towards affecting that outcome.

The inconsistency in our present position tends to be stultifying and dangerous to our security. Until a few months ago, foreign diplomats here regularly used to discount a large part of what the President said in his speeches on the theory that he could not carry the country with him. The British worked on this assumption at the Brussels conference so Norman Davis, head of the American delegation, found himself largely ignored by foreign delegates who thought that they knew more than he did about America's role in world affairs. Diplomatic circles do not think this way any more but the transition to a new positive policy must be hastened or else the confusion on our part enables other powers to determine our fate. Our stake in world affairs is not lessened by any failure to take a firm stand when war and peace are decided.

Under these circumstances, it is nothing less than tragic that the New Deal should be weakest precisely in the State Department. Mr. Roosevelt can make excellent speeches in his most persuasive style but a few, forceful sentences by our ambassador in Berlin can do much damage. It happens that Hugh Wilson is as reactionary a diplomat as we have. He is little more than the echo of Nevile Henderson, the British ambassador and a Cliveden man. Left and liberal circles in London constantly complain of the encouragement given to Henderson by Wilson. Or our ambassador in Paris, William C. Bullitt, expresses notions

THE ISOLATIONIST

"I'll save my branch, anyhow."



John Groth

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about the Franco-Soviet pact which can make the French feel somewhat insecure. Mr. Bullitt is still waging a private feud against the Soviets, mainly because he failed to collect the Kerensky loans and return in glory to elective office. He is close to the President, who seems to refuse to believe that Bullitt could spoil a liberal past for such reasons. Or our Joe Kennedy in London, whose record on the Maritime Commission was pretty bad, can establish very close ties with the Chamberlain crowd (Mr. Chamberlain generally makes our Joe happy by seeing him in person). Joe Kennedy expects to run for governor of Massachusetts some day pretty soon and the Boston Catholic hierarchy would have a good deal to say about that. William Phillips, our ambassador to Italy, is able and smooth but a tory like Wilson.

The work of a progressive ambassador may be nullified by the State Department "Cagoulards." It is no longer a secret that Ambassador Claude G. Bowers' reports on Spain were given the silent-treatment for many months by the adviser on political relations who specializes in Western European affairs, James Clement Dunn. So were William E. Dodd's from Germany before him. Among the permanent officials, the two most energetic figures are Dunn and Sumner Welles, the under-secretary, a Maryland bourbon. There is not a single New Dealer in the entire department, and Mr. Hull is something less than a dynamic inspiration. No man can hold a post in the department unless he comes in with a large, independent income and there are no expense accounts. The proper schooling, family, friends, and financial backing which a vicious, aristocratic tradition has required in the department makes the permanent service peculiarly susceptible to the world view of the British Prime Minister rather than that of its own chief executive.

There is another aspect of this State Department situation which deserves more attention than it has received. The foreign offices in European countries are almost invariably the easiest sources of news and the most responsive to public opinion and the press. Within certain limits, it is always possible to get a fairly reliable report on the most important policy-making conferences abroad, through inspired sources or through continuous leaks. As a result, European public opinion is not uninformed about their government's foreign policy. But our State Department uniquely defies the democratic process of government. Very few correspondents have any lines into it, Drew Pearson being the notable exception. The situation is worse now than ever, for a man like Dunn neither dares nor cares to interpret the President's attitude. Mr. Hull's conferences are less attended than those of any other Cabinet member, unless the correspondents get a hot tip or a critical foreign situation warrants some waste of time at chance inquiries.

Notwithstanding, the State Department is extremely susceptible to public opinion or pressure, probably because it does not get enough of it and tries to discourage it as much as possible. I have noticed an interesting aspect of this. The pacifist societies, organized in Frederick J. Libby's National Council for Prevention of War, represent the single greatest source of Chamberlain propaganda in this country. Mr. Libby keeps in step with the tory axis for his own purposes. Applying the Tydings-George strategy to foreign affairs, the leading editorial in the current issue of *Peace Action,* written by himself, declares that "this nation cannot afford to have a Congress that will merely 'rubber stamp' the President's foreign policy." The National Council for Prevention of War succeeds in making an awful noise in Washington though it is practically non-existent throughout the country except on paper. It concentrates all its efforts in the capital, bombarding congressmen and the newspapers and the State Department with handouts and protests in a systematic and continuous way. I am convinced that this simple tactic has brought results out of all proportion to popular support or influence. And the State Department listens to Mr. Libby and his big bass drum.

What this country needs is a foreign policy which its people can understand and support. If the present transition toward such a policy moves slowly, the emergency does not. The administration looks at war fully aware that our neutrality legislation constitutes a standing encouragement to the aggressor. Its plans call for some change, as indicated previously, but Congress does not meet until next January and part of the Neutrality Act does not expire until next May.

There is no end of lamentation among us whenever the British tories succeed in surrendering another part of the democratic world to the fascist axis. There is scorn and righteous indignation. But there is also failure to appreciate our own responsibilities and our own guilt as a nation. The State Department remains an aristocratic island shut in upon itself and the newspapers keep us badly informed on our foreign policy or lack of it because long-standing toleration has given both a feeling of immunity.

Washington looks at war, certainly with dread but I suspect without very definite ideas of itself as a positive force too. The administration, which has experimented with formulas for the eventual revision of the Neutrality Act, counted upon time which it does not have.

The present position can be boiled down to this: Neither the President nor the people want the chief piece of foreign policy on the books but it is taking too long to get rid of it and the substitute is still vague. If enough people stand up to be counted and say strongly enough that this country needs to distinguish between aggressor and victim, to help the victim and to discourage the aggressor, to take an initiative in organizing a collective peace front against the Hitlers and Chamberlains, every condition is present for effective action.

★ ★ ★

Love Song 1938

Herr Krupp is slyly intimate within our lives.
The shells spin westward from Osaka, cradled in trains
That jar the delicate print from the wall.

Skoda was an outland name: it smokes in our sleep.
Vickers blackens the schoolbook yew; Schneider-Creusot
Is closer than Jesus, du Pont more immanent than God.

Two cannot walk in the old way: they are counted; they are known.
This man will be mobilized when the accident of time
Has rolled upon him. She will be used in a hospital ward.

Narrow the night, Osaka rises on the Tokyo exchange;
Hasten the morning, they double du Pont shifts;
Hasten the light, my love, Herr Krupp has numbered the suns!

Who did not care for flowers, cares at the plain end of bloom.
Who once forsook the people, in each face observes
One now unknown at some blown outpost die with him.

Between the wars we share not life but armistice.
The moment crossed with bayonets must hold embrace
And breath, and briefly hate and all our love.

We wait no fixed appointment with the dust.
Mainly from the last dead, we learned the instant's golden core
And to advance before the firing-pin, before the breaking shell.

DON GORDON.

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Inside Czechoslovakia

"The Brand Has Nevertheless Been Lighted"

F. C. WEISKOPF

Though this article was written before Hitler's speech and the war crisis that it precipitated, it offers an illuminating and timely picture of the situation in Czechoslovakia. Its account of the preparations of the Henlein party for civil war has been confirmed by subsequent events.—THE EDITORS.

Prague, September 9.

IT WILL take one week for this letter to reach New York. In days like these, a week is a long time. In seven days Europe can perform a complete somersault. "By the time this letter reaches New York," the Prague postal clerk said as I handed him the envelope, "I may have forgotten all about the post office. As a corporal in the reserves, machine-gun division, I may be a soldier by then." The clerk spoke matter-of-factly, not as if he were given to panic or wild ideas. Nor is he exceptional. Of Prague's one million population, some five or six hundred thousand are thinking the same thought these days. And the people of all Czechoslovakia think and feel as Prague does. The gravest possible developments are anticipated, for it is realized that the climax of a crisis, such as Europe has not faced since 1914, is at hand. Yet no fevered spirit of war is in the air here like that reported by all who have traveled in the Third Reich. Again the great democratic majority of the people of Czechoslovakia demonstrate their calm and disciplined courage. For they know that if war has to come, they will fight with unbreakable determination. And they know, too, that for this very reason they will not stand alone. How strongly this conviction is held by the "man on the street" may perhaps be illustrated by the following story circulating among the diplomats here.

The new Rumanian ambassador had at one time spent many years in Prague as legation secretary, and had learned the Czech language. On his first stroll through town he was overtaken by a shower, and when the shower was over he stopped for a shoe-shine. Anxious to know how the people felt, he spoke to the bootblack: "Things don't look so good in Europe. Do you think there will be war? Aren't you scared?" The bootblack spat on his brush, thoughtfully. "Maybe we will have war. We don't want any, but *he* does. Scared? What do you think?" And he brushed away with increased vigor. "First, we're armed. Second, our Russian brother will not leave us in the lurch. You can bet your mother-in-law on that. Russia will help us and *he* will get it in the neck—good and plenty. The Russians will come in with or without the consent of Poland or Rumania."

The Rumanian ambassador is reported to have returned from his reconnoitering expedition in quite a brown study. The prevailing mood is to be prepared for the worst, but not to regard it as inevitable. Every effort is still being made to avert war in so far as one side can contribute to that end—since it takes both sides to avoid a war. The government is unceasing in its efforts to find a new basis for negotiations with the Sudeten German Party. At the present moment, the Statute of Nationalities is undergoing further revision. Hitherto, territories like Bohemia, Maehren-Silesia, and Slovakia have been the smallest self-governing units. Now they are to be divided up into still smaller units. About ten years ago there was a law dividing the country into cantons, called *Rupa* in Czech. But the law was not enforced. Now that law is being revived. The cantons, some of which will be wholly German, will enjoy far-reaching autonomy in matters of culture, trade and industry, local administration, and social welfare. An elected cantonal assembly will be in control.

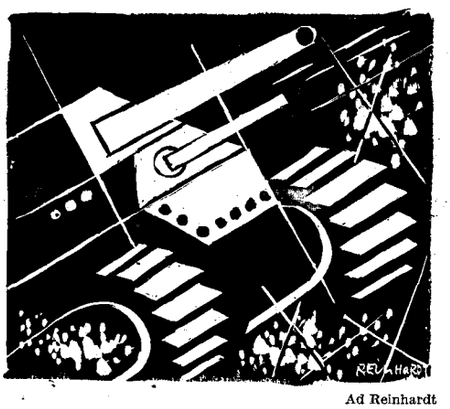
Of course under such a system of self-government it will be necessary to assure the rights of both the German democratic and the Czech minorities in the German cantons. Also, the security of the state and the authority of the general laws must not be impaired. And on this very account the Sudeten German Party is already opposed to the negotiations proposed along these new lines. That party is not interested in national self-government or nationality rights but in the erection of a totalitarian regime in the Sudeten region so that the interests of the Third Reich may be served through territorial expansion and added power. If further proof of this is wanted, the meeting between Lord Runciman and Henlein has supplied it. Henlein, the supposedly authorized and undisputed Führer of the Sudeten Germans, disposed of every specific question with the reply, "That is something I cannot decide until I have conferred with others." Who the others are has been made clear by Henlein's visits to Berchtesgaden.

Meanwhile, the government is giving renewed evidence of good faith but beyond that it cannot go without endangering the existence of Czechoslovakia and clashing with the great majority of the population. Already this majority is worried and while it continues to observe order, its nerves are not made of steel. This, too, is a factor which the government must consider. The Czech people repeatedly and spontaneously have shown that they would like to live in peace and friendship with the Sudeten Germans. Every Sunday great "meetings of brotherhood" are celebrated, in which tens of thousands of Czech and German democrats, Socialists, and Communists take part. These demonstrations are added evidence that a large section of even Henlein's adherents are, at bottom, anxious for peace, and follow their Führer only under pressure of propaganda and terror.

No, even now the war is not considered inevitable, and friends of peace in Czechoslovakia are doing their utmost to avoid it. This makes it the more imperative to point out certain symptoms and actions which show that on the other side nothing is being left undone to add fuel to the flames.

The Sudeten German Party is increasing its preparations for a civil war. In parts of North Maehren actual war games have been held by the FS (Henlein storm-troop organization). Over a thousand men took part in these "outdoor exercises" in Maehren-Schoenberg (Moravsky Sumperk). The FS is being hurriedly mobilized. Only the other day various organizations affiliated with the SDP (Sudeten German Nazi Party) purchased twenty large trucks from the Tetra works. In Prague, Brünn, Bratislava, Reichenberg, Karlsbad, and Aussig, some five hundred motorcycles have been bought for the use of SDP functionaries. Government authorities learned that several hundred SS leaders have come from Germany as tourists and business men and are staying in Sudeten territory. Cars from Germany have been observed recently stopping at gas stations along the border and, for no evident reason, exchanging their tires. Inside the rubber, and in the spare tires, fuses, and chemicals, police found instructions for illegal movements.

In several places around Karlsbad transportation of arms for the FS was organized. When the government banned a meeting of SDP leaders, this was taken as a pretext for SDP members to arm. This arming smells strongly of a putsch. But there is more to it than that. Prague foreign correspondents have information from a reliable source which is a key to the plans of Berlin and Asch. The upper staff of the FS, says this report, were discussing the "Spanish variant." This Spanish variant, it seems, was prepared by Berlin in the event that an open attack on Czechoslokakia should become too risky. "If an attack on Czechoslovakia should prove impossible," the authors



Ad Reinhardt

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of this plan argued, "we must find another way. Let the Sudeten Germans refuse all halfway concessions and insist upon complete autonomy. The Czechoslovakian government will either have to yield or the Sudeten Germans will rise in defense of their 'eternal rights.' If the Prague government then adopted strong measures, a struggle would break out in the Sudeten. This would not be war but only civil war, which volunteers could join without forcing France to act under her treaty obligations. And even if France went in, the English would behave as they did in the case of Spain, which is likewise a civil war. This would keep the conflict localized even if the volunteers brought their own tanks, planes, and guns with them."

How serious such intentions are may be judged from a recent incident. An issue of the *Sudetendeutsche Bauernzeitung (Sudeten German Farmers Gazette)* which was to expose a "Communist revolt" plot was confiscated. The "plot" did, however, appear in Adolf Hitler's *Voelkischer Beobachter*. The evident intention was to place any action of the SDP in the light of a movement against the danger of Communist revolt and thus have ready an explanation of who caused the outbreak. They followed out exactly the advice given in the Nazi "Boxheimer documents," which came to light in 1932 as the procedure of those who had staged the Reichstag fire. On this occasion the SDP plan misfired through the stupidity of the forgers and some very bad luck.

The author of the faked "Communist mobilization plan" betrayed in every line complete ignorance of the inner workings of the Communist movement. He discovered regional organizations which did not exist, used a terminology which was miles wide of the mark, and mentioned as leaders of the terroristic groups and shock troops, persons whose names he had obviously lifted from the press, almost all of them artists and writers. Among them he made the mistake of mentioning certain names whose inclusion made the whole document a laughing-stock. Theater director E. F. Burian and the writer Malirova had been for some time at odds with the Communist Party; both were away on vacation while the document represented them as working on the mobilization plan in Prague. The leader of the "press terror organization" is described as Egon Erwin Kisch, who for over a year has been in Spain and France—unfortunately for the concocters of this forgery. But the best was yet to come. In the course of searching a suspect's home in Northern Bohemia, the police came across papers marked "Riedl mobilization plan." The police hotfooted it after this man Riedl, thinking they had something big. When they found him, he explained that he had received eight hundred kronen from the Sudeten German Party to write this Communist mobilization plan out of his own head!

So this attempt by the SDP proved a fiasco. But the nature of the attempt is still a serious one. The entire press of the Third Reich published scare headlines of this new evidence of "the Bolshevization of Czechoslovakia and terrorization of the Sudeten Germans." There is every reason to suppose that this concoction will be followed by others. From the beginning the Nazis have used forgery, lying, and provocation as their tools. Should war break out, they will not depart from customary methods which they have always found useful.

It is impossible to prophesy what will happen even in the time it takes for this article to reach New York. Possibly the powers who are striving for peace may exorcise this crisis too. Perhaps Europe will have a fresh breathing spell. "The Nazis," a man holding a high position in the Czech government told me, "could not erupt in such a situation, if they were only 100 percent madmen and adventurers. But since, more than that, they are people apt to run amuck, there is no telling." A person in the British embassy in Prague pointed out the isolation and internal weakness of the Third Reich as the most dangerous part of the whole thing. He said, "Hitler may break loose in an attempt to get out of a blind alley. He could not endure a second May 21. He must find a way to dress up his retreat as a victory. If he can do this, it may be presumed he will back down." This does not justify but it does go far to explain the British policy of repeated concessions and Britain's care not to offend fascist prestige. But the Czech and German anti-fascists are not swayed by such considerations. They are making every preparation to be ready for any emergency. They have not forgotten that after May 21 a member of the directing council of the SDP said, "The brand has nevertheless been lighted."

Even should catastrophe now be averted, the world must know that Asch and Berlin are making every effort to keep the firebrands burning.

John Heliker

Geneva

For Concerted Action

THE mad rush of nations toward war and mutual destruction, engineered by the autocratic fascist powers, can be checked if the proper economic measures are put to use, and we urge that fascist war aggression be resisted through economic means. We call upon the democratic nations of the world to join efforts in utilizing to the utmost the economic instrumentalities of peace, to the end that war may be prevented. We call upon the government of the United States to cooperate to that end and by such means, in an associated effort with the democratic forces of all nations, to stop the warmakers and to preserve peace and democracy.—RESOLUTION *of New York State CIO Convention.*

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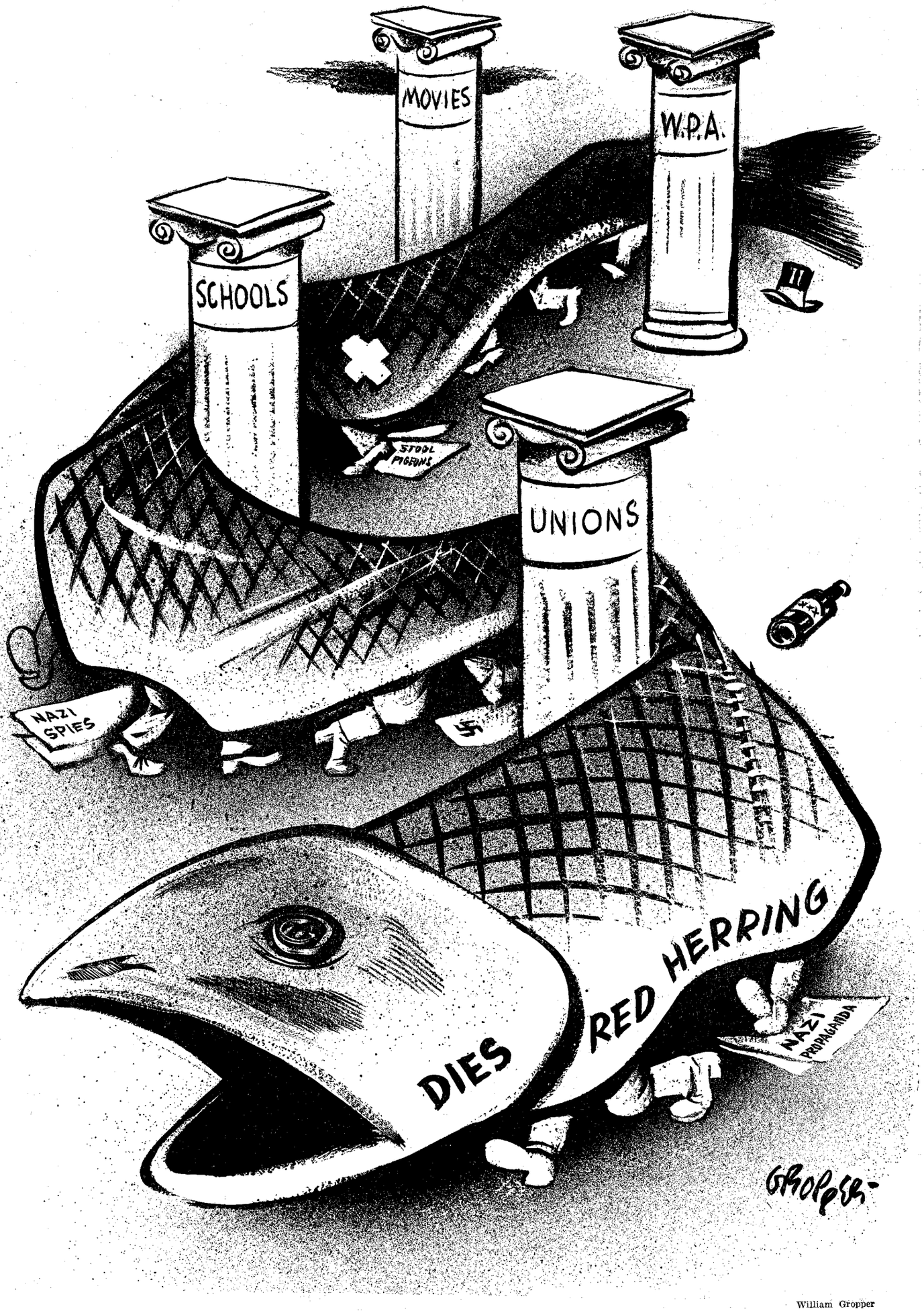

William Gropper

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The Lower Depths

HUMANITY touched its heights and its depths last week. The heights were touched by the government and the people of Czechoslovakia in an inimitable demonstration of courage and conviction under the greatest conceivable pressure. No matter what happens, they have shown where they stand. The depths were touched by the leaders of the British and French governments who betrayed their friends, broke their pledges, and misled their people. Dishonor and humiliation are the least of the wrongs which Chamberlain and Daladier have done to Europe and to the world. They have done their utmost to wreck one of the last bastions of democracy and safeguards of peace. If Czechoslovakia falls, the forces of a general war may no longer be controllable.

Chamberlain did not have to go to Berchtesgaden to learn what Hitler wanted. That was camouflage. That was only to make it appear as though an old man of sixty-nine would make any sacrifice to learn the price of peace. British diplomacy does not work that way. The ultimatum from Berchtesgaden, if obeyed, will lead to a German edition of the Anglo-Italian agreement; the tories of Britain did not start their careers as the allies of the fascist axis only yesterday. They encouraged aggressions before; they have done so now; and the aggressions will come faster and fuller if this one succeeds.

The fascists and their accomplices have placed the emphasis on peace to cover up their guilt. Peace, peace, but there is no peace in their hypocrisy. There will be no peace in the Sudeten region for the Czechs and the German democrats if Hitler makes it into a concentration camp. There will be no peace if Poland and Hungary follow a successful German example. There will be no peace for the non-Sudeten Czechs, economically cut off from their factories and their markets in Bohemia, deprived of their natural defenses. There will be war against Czechoslovakia, a frightful, uneven, systematic, cold slaughter if the ultimatum from Berchtesgaden is obeyed.

And the essence of the problem which we as part of the world confront is so simple. Hitler demands Czechoslovakia or else he will attack by force. The democratic powers have two alternatives. If they agree, as they agreed to Austria and to Ethiopia and to Spain, it is only a matter of time, and a brief time, before there will be other demands until finally even the biggest powers will have to fight or surrender. If they stick together and resist, the odds against Hitler are so great that he cannot possibly win, and countries do not fight unless victory is possible.

From Washington has come no word as yet. This is the time to speak and to speak firmly. The democracy of Czechoslovakia needs our aid and our encouragement. It is so easy to be indignant. It is so much more important to do something ourselves.

Victories for Labor

LABOR chalked up two major victories last week, victories won over the most dangerous attacks on unionization since the CIO organization struggles of last year.

In Detroit, the auto-union executive board unanimously accepted the CIO peace plan for unity within the organization. On the West Coast, Harry Bridges, CIO leader, faced with the "divide and rule" attacks of San Francisco employers, won a clean-cut victory with the terms of the new longshoremen's contract.

The CIO, during the past year, has been consolidating the great gains of its organization sweep of the year before. While the reactionary press chortled, it faced two serious threats—the inter-union dispute in the auto organization, and the ganging up of West Coast employers on the CIO longshoremen.

Now both challenges have been met successfully. Philip Murray and Sidney Hillman, appointed by John L. Lewis to meet with the United Automobile Workers executive board, have effected a compromise in the spirit of Lewis' original plan, and the CIO should be able now to push a new organization drive in the industry. Harry Bridges, preparing to resist the shipowners' head-on assault, found strength in rank-and-file unity between AFL and CIO union members indicated in the department-store strike.

These victories have greatly strengthened the CIO. The consolidation period has shown the new union federation able to withstand the most bitter attacks. Reactionaries who hoped the CIO would lose ground after its organization drive have been disappointed. Traitors from within, Lovestoneites, and Trotskyites have been defeated.

American industrial workers reached out for unionization last year. This year they proved that they can keep it. The CIO is here to stay.

What the Primaries Mean

AS WE go to press, the last of the primary contests are being held in four states. Chief national interest is centered on New York City, where the voters of the Sixteenth Congressional District are deciding whether Rep. John J. O'Connor, one of the Copperhead Democrats whose defeat has been urged by President Roosevelt, shall continue his career as a rubber stamp of the utilities and other big business interests. In another important New York contest former Rep. Vito Marcantonio, president of the International Labor Defense, is making a gallant bid for nomination in the American Labor Party, Republican, and Democratic primaries.

A systematic campaign of misrepresentation by the anti-New Deal press has tended to obscure not only the issues involved in the primary struggles, but even their results. Nine to nothing, crow the newspapers, a 100 percent defeat for what they have been pleased to call the "Roosevelt purge." They arrive at this figure by counting as New Deal defeats the renomination of such reactionaries as Senators Van Nuys of Indiana, Clark of Missouri, and Adams of Colorado, despite the fact that the President waged no battle against these men, and by ignoring or minimizing sweeping New Deal victories in Michigan, Washington, Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and other states.

The fact is that, with the exception of four states, Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland, and Texas, the New Deal was generally successful wherever it undertook serious campaigns against right-wing Democrats. The defeat of Senator Pope in Idaho cannot be counted as a rejection of a New Deal candidate since even the tory press admits that this was accomplished by packing the Democratic primary with Republican voters.

In regard to the primaries in Georgia, South Carolina, and Maryland, it would be foolish to deny that the renomination of Senators George, Smith, and Tydings is a victory for reaction. However, failure to see that the forces of progress and democracy have won something even in defeat is to adopt a narrow and schematic view of the political struggle developing throughout the country. President Roosevelt courageously

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undertook to wage his most determined fight against reaction in three states where the odds were most heavily against the liberal candidates. In at least two of these states, Georgia and South Carolina, the odds were determined not only by the powerful corporate interests supporting George and Smith, but by the denial of elementary democratic rights to large numbers of voters through the poll tax and the disfranchisement of Negroes.

Had Roosevelt been thinking solely in terms of victory or defeat in the primaries, he would undoubtedly have chosen safer territory in which to give battle. It is evident, however, that the President had much broader aims in view. What he sought primarily was to hasten the process of political differentiation by smoking out the reactionaries within his own party who have been giving lip service to the New Deal and betraying it in Congress. In this he has been eminently successful. By raising the issue of progress versus reaction and branding men like George, Smith, and Tydings as Republicans in disguise he has clarified the atmosphere and contributed greatly to the realignment of political forces that is essential for the victory of democracy in 1940. And the fact that he chose to make this fight in the South is evidence that he recognizes that if reaction is to be defeated, it must, above all, be defeated there where for so many years its rule has gone unchallenged.

The chief conclusion to be drawn from the primary results is that Roosevelt alone, despite his great prestige and popularity, cannot defeat the pro-fascist monopolies and their Republican-Democratic henchmen. Far greater unity and far more effective organization of the popular forces is required if democracy is to win.

The Women Should Know

THE results of a nationwide poll of women on questions centering around the problem of relief are published in the October *Ladies Home Journal*. What the poll actually shows is overwhelming support on the part of the country's women of the major aspects of the New Deal's relief policies. Seventy-four percent of those responding answered affirmatively the question, "Do you think the government should provide enough to live on for all people who cannot find work?" Ninety-two percent favored work relief as against a dole or cash-relief system, thus registering their approval of the New Deal policy of relief through WPA and other federal and state relief projects. The confusion on certain subordinate issues was evident in a majority vote against the question: "Do you think relief should be given to men on strike?"

Broken down into special-interest and income groups the poll showed clear class lines, with the lower-income groups showing a far higher proportion of approval of New Deal policies than the higher-income categories; the women in the urban centers tended to be less confused than those in farm districts; of the two age groups, those under thirty and those over forty-five, the younger was more progressive; and *Ladies Home Journal* readers were surpassed in reaction only by the highest income group tabulated.

The basic agreement on the social responsibility for the unemployed is significant and encouraging. The befuddlement on subordinate questions—obviously inculcated by the pious contention of the reactionary press that relief *per se* is socially justified but that New Deal methods work against popular interest—is a warning to progressives that education in progress and democracy is the order of the day.

Heil Dies!

THE methods employed by the Dies committee—the type of witnesses summoned, the character of the testimony allowed and solicited, and, above all, the timing of the hearings to coincide with the primaries and on the eve of the elections—all point to one conclusion: The Dies committee is less interested in uncovering "un-American activities" than in compromising, directly and by innuendo, the New Deal, President Roosevelt, and every progressive force supporting the administration. The committee's methods have been so malodorous and its technique so crude that a goodly portion of even the capitalist press (39 percent of it) has expressed criticism of the ignorantly sweeping and absurd "revelations."

But we are indebted to the *Daily Worker* and its ace reporter, John L. Spivak, for some of the juiciest bits about the Dies committee. Take, for instance, the chief investigator for the Dies committee, Mr. Edward S. Sullivan. Spivak presents a mine of carefully documented proof as to the character and record of this "gentleman": an irresponsible drunkard, a thief, and an organizer of German Nazi groups in this country. "Slap-Happy Eddie was given a six-month jail sentence at the House of Correction in Billerica, Mass., for stealing $425 from E. P. Rice," charges Spivak, reproducing the judgment in the First District Court of Eastern Middlesex for the March term of 1932. Spivak also cites a speech delivered by Edward S. Sullivan on June 5, 1934, before 2,500 Nazis at Turnhall in Yorkville. To the sound of uproarious applause, this drunkard and thief—fit exponent of Nazi ideology—shouted: "Throw the goddam lousy Jews—all of them—into the Atlantic Ocean. We'll get rid of the stinking kikes! . . . I am going back to Boston to fight for Hitler. In Boston we will organize a Nazi group and you will hear of our activities. Heil Hitler!"

Or take the most recent star witness at the committee's hearings in New York—the grotesque Edwin P. Banta, the gentleman whom the leading editorial scribe in the New York *Herald Tribune* built up as a "veteran newspaper man," a "librarian for the project," a "trained reporter in the thick of the situation," and one therefore who "should know whereof he speaks." Spivak presents incontrovertible documentary evidence that Banta is a stool pigeon and a declared Nazi propagandist who speaks openly under the auspices of the German American Bund—a notorious Nazi outfit. Furthermore, Banta is an incurable crackpot who, according to authentic information obtained independently of Spivak, was for some time under observation at the Polyclinic Hospital and found suffering from definite paranoiac and megalomaniacal tendencies. Yet it is the testimony of such disreputable creatures as Banta and Sullivan that the Dies committee offers to the public and that the dignified New York *Times* and *Herald Tribune* smear over the front page with evident pleasure.

Spivak also charges that, in addition to Sullivan and Banta, one of the Dies committee's major sources of "information" is a woman who has been introducing secret Nazi agents to officers at the naval base in San Diego. Then there is the strangely suspicious circumstance of three shady characters—Germans working in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and, judging by the evidence presented in the *Daily Worker*, Nazi spies—whom the Dies committee had subpoenaed but failed to examine.

An odd and shameful paradox: The activities of a congressional committee set up to investigate un-American activities are themselves glaringly un-American. In the light of the above facts, we suggest that another congressional committee be appointed to investigate the activities of the present investigators.

Anti-Semitism Here

SEVERAL months ago Dr. Kurt Rosenfeld, former Social Democratic Minister of Justice in Prussia, declared that signs of anti-Semitism were more widespread in the United States today than they were in Germany at the time Hitler took power. It would be pleasant to regard this statement as alarmist but, unfortunately, anti-Semitic prejudice in this country is no longer merely a casual and subterranean phenomenon.

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Increasingly it assumes active and virulent forms that are part of the general pattern of political reaction and incipient fascism. A case in point is the current issue of Father Coughlin's magazine, *Social Justice*. For weeks *Social Justice* has been republishing the notorious anti-Semitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* Coughlin insisting disingenuously that he was not vouching for the document's authenticity or attributing its authorship to Jews.

The current issue of *Social Justice,* however, contains some additional ventures into Jew-baiting that leave no doubt as to where the Royal Oak fascist stands. On page 13 it publishes a defense of Mussolini's anti-Semitic measures, declaring that "our leftist press" has given "a distorted perspective of the alleged 'persecution' of the Jews in Italy." And on page 14, in the course of an article giving complete support to Hitler's aggression against Czechoslovakia, appears the following sentence: "If war does come, it will be because the Jewish internationalists, who dictate to the puppet rulers of Czechoslovakia, want war."

By his open Jew-baiting Father Coughlin has set himself in opposition to the recent utterances of Pope Pius XI denouncing "racism" and anti-Semitism. As is pointed out editorially in the September 16 issue of *The New World,* official organ of the archdiocese of Chicago, "to be anti-Semitic is to be anti-Christian, and to deny human rights to one is to deny human rights to all, and if uncontrolled race hatred is allowed to grow in intensity, it can some day consume all of us." Those Catholics as well as non-Catholics who support the same anti-New Deal, anti-labor, anti-progressive policies as Father Coughlin cannot escape the full sinister implications of their position.

What A & P Forgot

CLEARLY speaking for the major chains, the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. published an advertisement the other day attacking the taxation measure which Rep. Wright Patman of Texas plans to introduce at the coming session of Congress. Newspapers from the New York *Times* to the *Herald Tribune* and the Scripps Howard press quickly offered the A & P a rebate on its advertising by editorial approval of the chain-store position.

Significantly, the chains attempt to identify their own welfare with the larger public interest. In a rather studied it-hurts-you-more-than-it-hurts-me manner, the brothers Hartford, A & P owners, insist that the farmers will lose an important market for their produce, that 900,000 chain-store employees will be thrown out of work, that the consumer will no longer benefit from low price economies if the chains are forced out of business.

But the assumption that taxation will force the chains to discontinue, which is the basic premise of the A & P argument, is completely false. Nor have taxes on chain stores in twenty states compelled the chains to close up shop.

Taking the arguments in themselves, it is clear that the farmer is less concerned with just who finally distributes his product than with the prices the distributor is willing to pay. In fact, the major complaint of the farmer arises precisely because the monopolies, such as the chains, exercise a control over the market which enables them to name their own prices at will.

Secondly, the 1935 Census of Distribution reveals that while independent stores paid their employees an average of $1,050 a year, the average wage of the chain store employee was $1,100. On the face of it, this seems to bear out the chain-store contention. But the figure needs correction, since 2 percent of chain-store workers (the highly paid executives) take 10 percent of the payroll. The real wage of the average chain store employee, therefore, comes to $991, or $59 less than the clerk's pay in the independent store.

Whether the chains offer consumers lower prices and better merchandise than the independent is beside the point, since there is no reason why they cannot continue these advantages and still absorb the tax. In fact, the importance of the issue which the A & P raises transcends the specific merit of the Patman proposal. It is true that taxation alone will not serve to smash the grip of monopoly. But the taxation slogan has become a rallying ground for little business discontent, and brings to the surface of national politics the problem of monopoly in the retail field, demonstrating anew that there is no community of interest between little and big business.

A similar moral can be drawn from the meeting in Pittsburgh last week of the National Smaller Business Association, whose programmatic proposals read like a press release from the Republican National Committee. Attacking the Wagner act and demanding cessation of government spending, the speakers at these sessions might have been addressing the National Manufacturers Association.

It was on the issue of government credit that this convention gave itself away, tabling a motion for government help to little business on the grounds that this contradicted its stand against government spending. It is indeed the recognition of this paradox which exposes the gathering as unrepresentative. Because, above all else, little business today wants government credit.

The failure of the National Smaller Business Association to second this universal demand indicates the counterfeit character of the association's officialdom. At the same time, it underlines once again, as pointed out in this issue by Joseph Starobin in the concluding article of his series on little business, that the small business man needs effective leadership on the basis of a progressive program today as never before.

Sinclair at Sixty

UPTON SINCLAIR'S books have been translated in forty-seven languages. They have been published in thirty-nine countries. No American writer has done more to defeat the myth of cultural isolationism. His books were burned by Hitler in 1933, but Sinclair was justly skeptical whether the Nazis could find all of the several million copies which had been sold in Germany. In 1926, the Japanese government recalled all copies of *The Jungle* and cut out the last chapters, dealing with Socialism; but by 1931 the term *"Sinkurea Jidai"* or "the Sinclair era" was a byword among Japanese interested in modern literature. Ten years ago, Italy suppressed his publications; last year an Italian labor press in New York issued a popular edition of *No Pasaran!* If it is a tribute to Sinclair that he has been suppressed, though unsuccessfully, in the fascist countries, it is an even greater testimonial to his literary force and progressive outlook that 234 Sinclair titles have been published in the Soviet Union, where his *No Pasaran* appeared last year in an edition of 210,000.

At the age of sixty, Upton Sinclair can look back upon an enviable literary record. His recent work has continued a tradition characterized by a sturdy independence of judgment and an unshirking devotion to the Socialist ideals of democracy and justice. He has written an influential book in support of the Spanish loyalists. His attack on Henry Ford in *The Flivver King* was read by hundreds of thousands of automobile workers. His new book on *Little Steel* again shows a fine awareness of the immediate and paramount social struggles of the day.

But we wish to congratulate Upton Sinclair not so much for his record as for his future. On his sixtieth birthday, he is as vital a force for progress as any contemporary American writer. There has been no let-down in enthusiasm and courage. There has been no wavering in his conviction that Socialism is the ultimate source of our hope. He has taken his stand as a fighter against fascism. While we may differ with Sinclair on specific details, we are confident that the American people can look toward him as a powerful and devoted champion of democracy.

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Forsythe's Page

Thomas Wolfe

When I first knew Tom Wolfe he used to come into my office at *Scribner's,* ducking his head to get through the door and being careful not to rest his hand too heavily against anything in that ramshackle coop, for fear of pushing the whole affair over. He had a way of talking with his chin pushed out and the aggressiveness of that was heightened by the half-hoarse voice and the intense manner he invariably employed in even his casual conversation. When I kidded him, I always did it with an inward fear that this time he wasn't going to get it and I'd end up with my head in a pulp.

But he was a great guy and nobody took that sober manner seriously except when he got in a real rage and showed signs of tearing the building down. He was six feet seven and huge and he always looked as if he was on his way to a fire, having pulled his pants on as he was sliding down the pole. He evidently tugged his trousers up about him before going out, for the lining of the top of his pants always showed over the belt. It strikes me now that I have no idea how he dressed in his later years, because I can only think of him in that old raincoat which he wore winter and summer.

But our real love in common was baseball and we used to eat a hasty lunch on Saturday (I didn't get off till one o'clock) and then barge on up to see the Yanks or Giants, getting there at least an hour ahead of time so as not to miss anything. Tom would sit there and fill me with the latest sports gossip, worrying about Hubbell, debating about Joe McCarthy's talents as a manager. After a time the words would sound familiar to me and I'd recall that I'd read them the day before in the sporting pages, just as Tom had.

Coming down after the game, Tom was always a spectacle for the crowds because he would be standing, holding on to a strap, and his head would be so close to the roof of the car that everybody was waiting to see him bust right out through it after one of his vigorous speeches. He never hesitated to speak, wherever he was, and he spoke then above the roar of the train, his voice so powerful that people two cars on either side trembled. Part of the time I'd be trying to shush him and the rest of the time I'd be trying to make believe I wasn't with him. The most scandalous moment was when we got on the subject of critics. *Look Homeward, Angel* had been a great success but he kept away from another novel for five years, a great deal of the delay being due to apprehension of what they would do to his next book. At the height of our discussion on this matter, Tom suddenly shouted at the top of his lungs, his face stuck forward and his eyes flashing:

"That goddam Harry Hansen! He wants to ambush me!"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Hansen did nothing of the kind but Tom was convinced that there was a plot on to ruin him.

By this time you'll have the idea he was a humorless man, which is farthest from the truth. His books disprove it and his conversation utterly annihilated the notion. I've never heard a funnier story than Tom's experience with the lady agent who was going to make him a Hollywood big shot after the appearance of *Look Howeward, Angel.* The negotiations went on for months. There were "feelers" and then "nibbles." Very mysteriously, she was engaged in a "dicker." Would he take this, would he take that? Tom kept getting more excited and finally the agent rushed in with the great news. It was settled—well, practically settled. Tom's eyes bogged out. He had visions: five thousand a week, a private car out and back, probably even a chauffeur and a butler.

"It's all settled," cried the lady. "If you can just hitch-hike out there, I've made an appointment for you to talk to a man. . . ."

His next best story, and he had hundreds of them, all told in the most subtle way with no straining for emphasis, concerned Sinclair Lewis. Lewis had just made his speech in Stockholm accepting the Nobel Prize and had mentioned Wolfe among the future greats of America (Hemingway, O'Neill, Mike Gold, and a few others I have forgotten). Tom was in London when Lewis got there and of course they met. They had dinner and talked till about one o'clock when Tom got on a bus and rode an hour and a half across London to his lodgings. He was taking off his clothes when the phone rang. It was Lewis, urging him to come back at once, very important. Tom got into his clothes again, rode another hour and a half back across London, and arrived to find that Red was engaged in conversation with a third man.

"You see!" cried Lewis triumphantly to the third man, as Tom came in. "Didn't I tell you he was a big bastard!"

There are no end to the stories by and about Tom and I mention them now because I loved the big fellow and want others to know what sort of man he was. His death last week hit me harder than anything that has happened to me in years, and the kind words in the press about his accomplishments and about his undeniably great future were, for once, not misplaced. Some of my fiercest arguments have been with good friends who have complained of Wolfe's lack of discipline as a writer, his tendency to over-write, his lack of form. Such fault-finding about Wolfe has always infuriated me. I know his shortcomings and I still maintain that he was a genius, one of the very few we have. It is true that Maxwell Perkins at *Scribner's* helped him a great deal, and it is even truer that in late years the guiding genius in his life has been a remarkable girl named Elizabeth Nowell, his agent, but it was Wolfe himself who was the great man. When I think of us other thin, smidgely, anaemic writers, I laugh at the criticisms of Wolfe, who was a flood of imagination, truly a big man, a writer in the grand tradition.

He could have been the great radical writer and I think he was trending that way. In his early days he had great contempt for the Jews and many people resented that, but I ask them to recall that scene in *Of Time and the River* when he tells of the Jewish boy who irritated him to desperation and finally followed him home to his hotel to ask him more questions. Tom was an instructor at New York University, and this last appeal was too much for him. He hated the job and he hated this persistent youngster. He turned on him in rage, denouncing him. The boy quietly heard him out and then told Tom how desperately he needed to get an education, the haste in which he had to do it if he wanted to finish. It ended with the boy being Tom's best friend. He was losing his prejudices fast, the cheap ones, and gaining the important ones. He had loved Germany because the Germans made a fuss over him as a writer, but the arrival of Hitler changed all that and his story about the Nazi terror which was published in the *New Republic* was among his best things.

The tales about his verboseness as a writer are true. But almost none of his needless words were worthless words. The hundreds of pages which were eliminated from Wolfe's books were enough to make the reputation of a lesser man.

When the little sectarians in the earlier days were calling Wolfe a reactionary, he used to come to me to talk it over. I told him then what I tell any writer now: The truth is enough for us, that's all the radicalism I want from a writer. It's the material a writer uses and the way he handles it that make him a liberal or a reactionary. We had long arguments about it and I always insisted that he keep writing the way he was and keep learning.

I forget whether it was last year or the year before when he came back from the funeral of his father. There had been a great crowd there, both because the old man was a character and because Tom had made him known for all time in his books.

"You know," said Tom, trying to get it straight in his mind, "the only people I could talk to were the fellows who worked in Papa's shop, the stone cutters. I didn't seem to know the rest of them anymore."

ROBERT FORSYTHE.

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They Want the New Deal

Voters in the Northwest Back Liberal Democrats

ROGER CHASE

Tacoma, Wash.

BUSINESS and "civic" leaders, lumbermen, farmer-capitalists, and others described locally as dog-salmon aristocracy, who make up the anti-Roosevelt contingent in this region, have almost given up denying that the New Deal has been a truer-than-average friend to the Pacific Northwest.

Whatever else they have to say, and they are like all the rest who fume at Roosevelt-sponsored legislation and loathe the NLRB, they find their favorite battle cry choked in their throats. To hell with the sharecroppers in the South, they would like to say, and ditto child labor and reciprocity and the good-neighbor policy; what has he done for us way up here in the Northwest corner?

But on the border between Washington and Oregon stands Bonneville and in Eastern Washington Grand Coulee will soon be spilling waters of the Columbia River over the cliffside onto thousands of arid acres, and along comes the new national park on the Olympic Peninsula. This week, too, bids were called on construction of the giant Narrows Bridge across Puget Sound. This kind of munificence leaves booster-bourbons with very little to say.

To those whose main concern is keeping within hailing distance of that "American" standard of living, the New Deal has paid off in a more important way. Still vividly recalled by those middle-aged and over is the depression of the nineties when the one-industry region west of the Cascade Mountains saw the lumber market vanish in the midst of a building boom. That was the time when, as one politician put it, the people's diet consisted so exclusively of clams that their bellies rose and fell with the tide.

New Deal relief, and that alone, has carried the working class of Western Washington and Oregon through another depression in which employment in the lumber industry dwindled close to zero.

The New Deal has made itself good to a majority of voters here in the Northwest. It is this fact, responsible in Oregon for the defeat of reactionary Gov. Charles Martin by a New Dealer in the Democratic primaries, which promises in Washington a mid-term political struggle meriting the attention of the entire nation. For here in the state of Washington, as in Washington, D. C., the big story is what's happening and what's going to happen to the Democratic Party. The difference is that out here voters may not have to wait until 1940 to find the realignment virtually complete. New Dealers and Old Dealers seem to agree that a reshuffling is both desirable and inevitable.

One reason why things move fast in Washington is the Washington Commonwealth Federation. Originally an offshoot of Upton Sinclair's End Poverty in California movement, the WCF long ago shed its Utopian trappings. Its greatest strength comes from the industrial areas bordering on Puget Sound (nearly two-thirds of the state's population lies within fifty miles of Seattle) but it has strong middle-class support and many friends among the farmers east of the mountains. It claims, with entire justification, that its widely circulated weekly newspaper is "the only large New Deal paper in Washington."

The WCF has written its progressive platform across the statute books at the state capitol in Olympia. Through two riotous state Democratic conventions it has rallied liberal forces to save the state party for the New Deal. Without the WCF, the split between AFL and CIO in the state would have been immeasurably greater and would have cut deeply into politics, threatening for Washington's liberal congressmen the disaster that befell Maury Maverick in Texas.

The federation has convinced such organizations as the Grange, and the most powerful units in the CIO and AFL that it is willing to cooperate and well worth cooperating with. Perhaps best of all, it has not for a moment lost touch with the large section of the state's population whose main interest is old-age pensions. Howard Costigan, vigorous and efficient executive of the federation, helped to organize the now influential Washington Old-Age Pension Union and candidates in the coming elections will endorse the pensioners' program if they want federation endorsement.

Gov. Clarence Martin, who wants to replace Sen. Lewis Schwellenbach in 1940, leads what the Republican press would have you believe is a powerful anti-New Deal wing of the Democratic Party. Because it is not powerful enough, Martin daily moves closer to open alignment with the Republicans. Evidently Martin and the Republicans hoped progressives would run a candidate against Sen. Homer T. Bone this year, Bone's record not having been simon-pure on the New Deal side. But the progressives were too smart.

A few months ago the biggest question mark in the Northwest political picture was union labor. Seattle is the home town and stronghold of Dave Beck, international vice-president of the Teamsters Union, who has, off and on, been regarded as the most formidable enemy of the CIO in the labor movement. The late Mayor Dore of Seattle was Beck's grateful political henchman. Dore used to boast that Seattle was "the strongest AFL town in the country." "We've driven the CIO down to the waterfront," Dore announced after his police and Beck's strong-arm squad had dispersed Newspaper Guild pickets in the Seattle *Star* strike, "We're gonna drive 'em into the bay now."

Dore was defeated in last year's municipal primaries by the progressive Lieut. Gov. Vic Meyers, and the juicy "labor terrorism" trials (one of the Teamsters' leaders was this month sentenced for twelve years) have hurt Beck's prestige. The CIO hasn't been driven into Elliott Bay, and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union has managed to make itself very much at home on the waterfront.

Oregon's publicity trials of Beck lieutenants have had mixed consequences. Governor Martin (no relation to Washington's Clarence) used them as a rostrum on which to state that Harry Bridges ought to be expelled from the country and the NLRB from public life. Martin was the leading spirit and publicity beneficiary of the roundup, but this could not have been a help to him politically, for he failed to survive his next encounter with the voters.

Another anti-labor petard that threatens to explode in its sponsors' faces is the unbelievable "Initiative 130," offered by the vigilante Associated Farmers of Washington and the equally dubious Women of Washington for the electorate's approval this fall. This proposal, which would virtually rob labor of its strike weapon, has done more to reunite the labor movement of Washington than any other single factor. This year's state AFL convention called for the formation of a committee to meet with the "CIO and all progressive forces" to fight the initiative. Out of the fight, declares the official AFL organ, "we are hopeful will come a more lasting and a more unified labor movement."

Fortunately, the state has a congresssional delegation that it can be satisfied to reelect all down the line. Led by John Coffee of Tacoma and Knute Hill of Prosser the House group merits a strictly "A" rating. And with the exception of Hill, who faces a stiff struggle in the most conservative section of the state, the chances are that many or most of them will go back for another term.

In the September 13 primaries Coffee and Hill, together with Congressmen Magnuson, Wallgren, and Smith—New Dealers all—won handily. Their pluralities ranged from slightly under three-to-one to somewhat over seven-to-one. Congressman Charles H. Leavy was unopposed.

Senator Bone experienced no difficulty in gaining renomination. And a comparison of Democratic and Republican votes in the senatorial "race" would indicate that Bone can go fishing until after the November elections.

Perhaps one is indiscreet to say so—for the

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papers are keeping it a secret—but it is nevertheless true that the state of Washington has given the New Deal a genuine vote of confidence.

At the party convention last month the right wing sought to discredit the liberal congressmen by way of a resounding anti-New Deal party platform. In order to do this it was necessary to take control of the convention away from the liberals, and to control the convention the old guard would have to abolish the unit-voting system under which large county delegations had been committed to support the New Deal. The temporary chairman, being of the right-wing persuasion, was happy to entertain a motion "that this convention do not recognize unit voting by any group of delegates and that each delegate, or his proxy, must vote as an individual." Further than that, the temporary chairman was ready to call for a vote on the motion—by individuals!

That was the end of the right-winger's chairmanship and of the right-wing plot to control the convention. When the conclave broke up the Democratic Party of the State of Washington was more than ever a party of the New Deal.

Right now a purge is being attempted, a purge of "Communists" and "no-good" Democrats who persist in championing the New Deal against the wishes of Governor Martin and his spokesman John T. (Curse You Jack) Dalton. Most of the state party leaders have publicly declined to participate.

A. Redfield

One For All and All For One

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Labor Meets in Mexico

A Report on the Latin-American Conference

MARC FRANK

Mexico City

THE recent Latin-American Labor Congress in Mexico City and the formation of the Latin-American Labor Federation were events of major importance. To some extent, the federation is a triumph for the ideas held by President Cárdenas and by the president of the new body, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, of the Mexican Workers Federation. Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia hold key positions in the executive committee, and it is noteworthy that the Labor Congress was carried over to the almost equally important Congress Against War and Fascism. Many of the delegates are accredited to both, and the very important fraternal delegates to the Labor Congress, Léon Jouhaux, of the French Confederation of Labor, Ramon Gonzalez Peña of Spain, and others form the board of the second congress.

To the opening of the Congress Against War and Fascism, President Cárdenas made perhaps the most striking speech of his presidency, implicitly setting up a more progressive "bill of nation's rights" against Cordell Hull's reaffirmation of streamlined dollar-diplomacy in his last note to Mexico. In fact, as John L. Lewis suggested in so many words, the basic principles of Roosevelt's New Deal are being adopted, often in direct opposition to the reactionary Latin-American dictatorships, by the whole of Latin-American labor as the basis for national and international policy.

It would be an error to hold out too optimistic hopes for the immediate future of the new federation. It will have to struggle against divergencies within itself, against the varied sabotage of the reactionary leadership of the British Trades Union Congress, the Trotskyites, and such persons as William Green; against the frightened oil, mining, utilities, and exporting interests, mostly in foreign hands; and against the puppet dictatorships controlled by them and by the foreign bureaus of the international fascist network. It is notable that the key organizations, the organized workers of Mexico and Argentina, are working in countries where the British and American capitalists are most active and most militant.

On the other hand, the fact that the congress could be held at all, and in Mexico, where, according to reports in the United States press, either the Communists or the fascists have complete control—Lombardo Toledano pointed out this odd contradiction in a speech which delighted a packed Opera House—is of supreme significance. For the ideas crystallized by President Cárdenas and by Lewis, Jouhaux, and all the most important delegates simply stressed a profound understanding of the fundamentals of democracy very similar to those of Lincoln and of the French Revolution. To some observers, the congress resolutions seemed positively tame in their insistence on the mere bases of the Bill of Rights, but the reports showed in how few countries these existed and that where they exist, they are rarely unmenaced. Perez Leiros of Argentina, for example, seriously urged upon the delegates from the Geneva International Labor Office not to approve labor codes in Latin-America which look fine on paper but are actually never put into practice. If nothing else, the congress has done splendid work in exposing these frauds. John L. Lewis stated that "the revelations of the economic and social conditions in various countries made to this congress are in some respects astounding."

No less important than the congress sessions and resolutions were the contacts made by the delegates. At dinners, in hotel bedrooms, in the subdued hubbub in the hall, big questions were threshed out. Solidarity, essential to successful organization, was built. Paraguayans and Bolivians, Guatemalans and Mexicans discovered that their wrongs and the remedies for them coincided. Delegate after delegate discovered and stated publicly at the sessions that the nationalist divergencies which so often led to war were merely the result of the intrigues of the big foreign imperialist interests maintaining puppet dictatorships. Chile, for instance, revealed that it was almost certain that the *Nazista* putsch in Santiago was nothing more than a provocation in order to allow the present reactionary regime, faced by elections in which the Popular Front was certain of victory, to hold these elections under martial law and assure its reelection.

Fundamental, but raised sharply in public only once, by Ramon Gonzalez Peña, secretary of the United Labor Confederation of Spain, Minister of Justice in the Negrín Cabinet, and hero of the 1934 rising of the Asturian miners, was the question of political action by labor. The Spanish delegation, including Communists, Socialists, and Anarchists, was a visible proof, as Margarita Nelken pointed out, of the unity of republican Spain, and had come to bring the experience of the biggest *practical* fight against fascism yet known. The congress had adopted a resolution of mutual aid in union struggles throughout Latin-America. Peña raised the point that this was not sufficient. The war in Spain is not *only* a war to defend union rights, it is a war to the death against those who are attacking the fundamental human rights, and war is a category of politics. In Latin-America, as Cuba and Puerto Rico stressed, one obstacle to union rights is the defensive terror of the imperialisms blocking national independence movements. As Lewis said, "The revelations made here show conclusively that foreign corporations in various countries are exercising an influence with settled governments to impose and maintain miserable wage standards and degraded working and social conditions."

In the commission entrusted with the drawing up of the federation's constitution, the question arose implicitly—it was always implicit—on a very interesting motion by Cuba, enforced by a speech by Lázaro Peña, which was one of the meeting's high spots. The Cuban delegation revealed how mass pressure was driving would-be dictator Batista towards a more democratic policy to preserve his position. They therefore suggested that the workers could reasonably support the present Cuban governmental tendency, just as they could in Mexico and the United States. The commission added a most significant rider that the "Cuban workers probably know local conditions better than the congress does," and therefore approved the resolution *in this particular case*. Upon which Cuba extended its theses to include the independence of Puerto Rico.

Extending into the Congress Against War and Fascism, this implicit struggle is of supreme importance. Alejandro Carrillo, secretary of the Labor Congress, who eloquently pleaded Mexico's case against the oil companies recently at the University of Virginia debates, maintained that any regime which attacked civil liberties and showed fascist tendencies would automatically abolish union rights. This was, to some extent, the feeling of the congress. Brazil was specifically not invited because an invitation would give Getulio Vargas the chance to affirm demagogically that there was no fascism in Brazil. The same was true of the refusal to allow Sir Walter Citrine, of the British Trades Union Congress, to be given the chance to refuse the invitation in terms similar to those used by the AFL, gleefully seized upon simultaneously by the Trotskyist Diego Rivera and the fascist Dr. Atl in Mexico. This showed conclusively that union action *alone* will not be able to cope with the fascist threat in Latin-America. John L. Lewis saw this when he said: "First the workers should join unions, and, as then they will be able to gain fair wages, the right to organize, and so on, they will become more effective in exercising political influence in support of justifiable governmental policies."

★

Attention, Mr. Dies

DELEGATES to the Pan-American Trade-Union Congress in Mexico were hand-picked by the GPU.—DIEGO RIVERA, *Trotskyite and mural painter (when he has time), in the "Socialist Appeal."*

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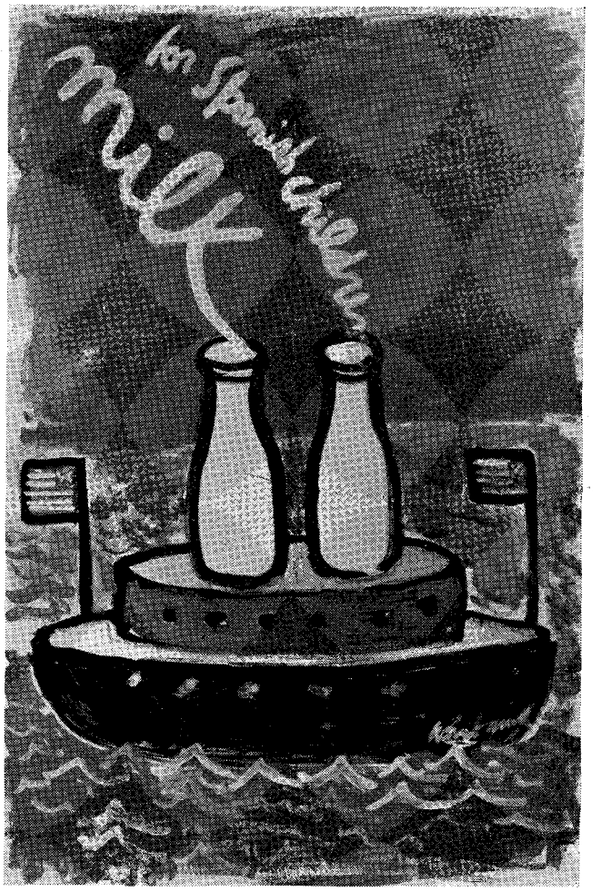
Soriano



A. Birnbaum

Fred Ellis

Sidney Hoff

Street Corner Poster Artists

LAST Wednesday afternoon, Rockwell Kent, William Gropper, Philip Evergood, Fred Ellis, John Groth, Soriano, A. Birnbaum, and Sid Hoff set up easels at New York City's busiest intersections and went to work on posters to publicize the North American Committee's campaign for the Relief Ship for Spain. The artists worked in pairs. Rockwell Kent and John Groth stationed themselves before the Father Duffy statue on Times Square; Gropper and Ellis worked outside the Times Building; Evergood and Soriano set up shop in Union Square; Hoff and Birnbaum took over Columbus Circle. The posters (four of which are reproduced on this page) were exhibited the following evening at the Theodore Dreiser dinner at the Hotel St. Moritz.

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What Little Business Needs

The Last of a Series on the Little Business Man

JOSEPH STAROBIN

WHAT the little business man needs is a program. A simple program establishing in clear, unmistakable terms the basic problems that confront him, and, equally clear and simple, the techniques to solve these problems.

The experience of Germany is proof that where the middle-class groups are beguiled by the vicious music of fascism, democracy is undermined and destroyed. On the other hand, the example of France, the example of Spain, indicates that where the workers take it upon themselves to win the merchants, farmers, and small business people, such an alliance can develop enormous defensive power against fascism, and ultimately must defeat it.

Where the small merchant lines up with the worker, where labor takes the initiative in defending the interests of the little business man and thus wins his support, there the designs of fascism are thwarted. Where such unity is hampered or destroyed the sons of the farmers appear with shotguns and pitchforks, the merchants are deputized and handed tear-gas bombs, and fascism is on the march.

Existing organizations are inadequate and after the little-business conference in Washington last February all sorts of new organizations mushroomed up in the fertile soil of business discontent. Among the national organizations—the National Retail Federation and others—the leadership has fallen into the hands of the chain-store executives, the agents of big business in the retail field. But the local associations, on a street, neighborhood, or borough basis, are also defective. Usually, they are formed by local lawyers who gather a few friendly shopkeepers about them, hire an accountant, rent office space, and gild their windows with the imposing lettering of what is, after all, just another kind of small business.

The very local structure of these organizations dooms them as inadequate, although their leadership is often more narrow than corrupt. Organized in "crafts," as butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, these small-shopkeeper groups have not developed the organizational forms and the programmatic appeal that express the needs of small business in attractive and compelling terms.

To begin with, the retailer must ask himself: Upon what does the prosperity of my store depend? Upon the purchasing power of the consumer, of course. And who is the consumer? He is the worker, the office clerk, the farmer, the professional, the man in the street.

How shall I reach him? —through his organizations, his clubs, his unions, his neighborhood political units. What shall I offer him in return for his support? Good merchandise, yes. Fair prices, certainly. High quality and service, of course. But more than that, the retailer must say, I can offer the consumer help in defense of his own interests. I can help him extend and maintain his standard of living, increase his purchasing power, which ultimately reacts to my own benefit. Offer him support in his right to unionize, his right to a living wage and decent hours. Stand by him when he is under attack from the reactionary press and unite with him politically in a new deal for the common people.

But there are two sides to such a bargain. The retailer expects more than generalizations from other sections of the progressive population. He expects specific and realistic help that will enable him to keep head and shoulders above water. At first glance, this appears to be a simple problem. Let the public come forward with a program in support of the little man. Let the trade unions, for instance, declare in favor of patronizing neighborhood stores, and urge such patronage upon the wives of trade-union members. Let the public cooperate in the establishment of a curfew for retail shops to bring burdensome hours down. Let the public support the organized efforts of the retailers to secure government credit. Let the public support the movement against sales taxes, and help eliminate the irritating license and occupancy taxes. Let the people throw its weight behind a program of taxation upon the basis of ability to pay.

All these are elements of a program, but they do not encompass the problem. Because the major problem confronting the little business man is monopoly, and the problem of fighting monopoly effectively is no simple matter.

Generally speaking, there are three things that can be done about monopoly.

One is to smash the monopolistic edifice, decentralize productive plant, shatter control over raw materials. This means a return to a former organization of production, a former relationship of classes. Presumably private competitive enterprise will step in to carry on the economic functions which monopoly fulfilled, but history indicates that there is no reason why monopolistic practices would not reassert themselves in a very short time. But this is an historically reactionary, as well as impossible, alternative. It is an economic step backwards, a return to a lower technical and productive level. And smashing the trusts assumes that the trusts would take the blow with hands folded, or that, in any case, they would not circumvent efforts at their dissolution as they did at the beginning of the twentieth century.

A second alternative is to socialize the monopolies, that is, take over their plants, resources, laboratories, etc., and operate them in the interests of the masses of the people. Objectively, the United States is ready for this step. Imperialism, as Lenin demonstrated twenty-five years ago, prepares and matures the conditions that make Socialism not only possible but necessary. Certainly, the advent of Socialism would alter the forms of distribution, and in this sense solve the retailer's problem. But it is not the solution that he desires. Leaving the matter with abstract references to the Socialism of tomorrow will hardly rally the small business man against the menace of monopoly today.

What remains is the regulation of the monopolies, curbing their abuses, checking their impact upon the small business man. The kind of attack is needed that will foster the growth of political understanding among the small business men, that will set him in motion against the monopolies, that will sever those allegiances of prejudices and naive faith that still bind large sections of the middle classes to American big business. What is needed is a program that gives the small business man concrete evidence of at least partial success, but, at the same time, matures his understanding of the basic class conflicts, the basic clash of interests between the whole working population and the handful of reactionary monopolists.

A program for the little man must be a political primer. It must generate awareness, understanding, and unity with other sections of the progressive phalanx.

For the fight against monopoly is a political struggle against that group of hard-faced men who would castrate the American republic and plunge the American people into greater deprivation, unemployment, and social decay. It is a fight in which each economic slogan is the mirror-image of the political slogan—organically related.

Several measures, taken together and operating simultaneously, can help the little business man. Taken separately, some of these measures have been tried, and found wanting. But all of these proposals comprise a program and guarantee a reasonable assurance of success provided the little business man will organize and fight for them.

The one big thing that little business wants is liquid credit, and this is Point 1 on our program. Credit today is scarce and expensive, and for most people it is no longer a matter of keeping their legitimate enterprise solvent. For most retailers, government credit amounts to direct relief from the effects of general business decay and chain-store competition. As things stand today, there is no agency to help the retailer. He is ineligible for unemployment insurance. He receives no social-security benefits. He cannot possibly get on WPA. Private banks will not lend money on retail collateral. He is thrown upon the mercy

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of loan sharks, whose exorbitant interest eats into his profit.

When the Smaller Business Association of Greater New York recently opened offices in a New York hotel to receive applications for government aid, it was literally swamped. Thousands of small business men lined up in front of the hotel, crowded the lobbies, and jammed the corridors. Over six thousand applications were forwarded to Washington demanding government aid for little business.

After all, there is no agency apart from the government that can fulfill the job in the proportions and scope that it demands. If private enterprise can't do it, the retailer feels, then the government must; and if the government is doing it for the railroads, for industry, for the farmers, why not also for little business?

"If the little men got together," one fellow said to me, "let's say into credit unions or even trade associations that mean business, the government could be persuaded to loan money at low rates of interest, simply because, through insurance funds, the government would be just as safe with its money as the loan sharks are today."

A second step which all small business people will applaud involves the abolition of nuisance taxes. Taking the license and the occupancy taxes as an example, the little man insists that he is not annoyed by these in principle. What he does object to is the fact that the license and occupancy taxes are imposed regardless of whether the owner is doing a large or a small business.

If the city or state is going to tax us at all, the storekeepers declare, let the tax be based upon ability to pay. Instead of a flat rate for all stores doing a certain volume of business, let there be taxes on the gross sales; let the big fellows pay in proportion, and make the exemptions high enough so that the little fellows have nothing to worry about.

This sentiment is another aspect of the antagonism against monopoly, which has taken the form of agitation for taxes on the chain stores. This tax may be a valuable demand as part of a larger and more fundamental program, but it is clear that it will not halt monopoly alone. By itself, taxing a chain for its number of stores will not discourage the chain stores from doing business. But the popularity of this demand (twenty state legislatures have been forced to tax the chains) is evidence of the deep currents of small business discontent, and the enormous potentialities in little business organization.

Another phase of this problem concerns the sales tax. Here again our program for the little business man must take advantage of existing discontent, and guide the resentment of the storekeeper into realistic and socially progressive channels.

Everybody hates the sales tax. No customer pays it without a growl. And the little man, who is accountable to the city or the state (or both) for a fixed percentage on his gross sales, is always looking for a way of chiseling and avoiding the tax.

But the contradiction arises when the little man realizes that the sales tax is used largely for relief of the unemployed. It would be a sorry program for the little man which sets him in opposition to the welfare of the unemployed, in the last analysis, the welfare of the working population. Which is, of course, exactly what the reactionaries are trying to do.

The way out of the dilemma lies in the formulation of a new taxation program, which will place the tax burden on big business, on monopoly itself, in short, taxation upon the incomes of the wealthy, upon the basis of ability to pay. This is a fundamental tax demand, which unites rather than divides the progressive population, and puts the finger of responsibility upon the upper wealthy classes, where the finger belongs.

A third element of the little business program revolves about the problem of price control and fair trade practices. Here also, beginnings have been made, with a tendency toward the same error, of regarding a law or an act, of itself, sufficient to solve a fundamental problem.

There is, for an example, a federal law, the Robinson-Patman act, which prevents chain stores from giving rebates to manufacturers in return for special price advantages; an act which prevents collusion between the manufacturer and the chain to the disadvantage of the little business man. There is, likewise, the Feld-Crawford act, in New York, which discourages the unfair trade practices and unfair advertising that undermine the retail price structure. By themselves these laws are weak, and the latter depends upon the voluntary cooperation of the chains. But the problem of maintaining a stable price level is important, and every law which whittles down the advantage of monopoly is worth support.

The problem of how to control prices democratically, how to maintain a floor and ceiling for prices brings up the proposal of retailers' cooperatives. These are purchase cooperatives, wherein groups of retailers in similar lines band together and purchase directly

★ ★ ★

Suicide Before Coffee in a Furnished Room

. . . each time it rains,
the landlord suffers neuralgic pains;
meek tenants rise as spiral wraiths
(it stops,)
descend as tinkling ice.
the aftermath: nostalgic, nice
placid, the world remains unchanged.

electric shuttled the scuttling winds,
banged blistered shutters in the rooming house,
swung the streetdoor on its screaming hinge
(soundeffects announcing turmoil, strife,)
revived faint thunder in recurring trains,
rasped wires slapping the windowpanes,
tapping cornices and cluttered pipes;
then fled in terror down the gurgling drains.

what blackguard battered his cringing brain?
he shrank from moist, catarrhal streets,
phlegm in the gutters, cracked concrete,
to fetid hallways, stairs that creaked,
vanished along the balustrade.
what purpose in this endless seeking?
always, his modest dreams betrayed.
listen: the landlord's new shoes squeaking;
end of the week, the rent unpaid.

evenings and evenings whizzed past corners;
he knew the trickle of secret bleeding,
throttled by wavering shapes of fear
peered at elysium, receding
filled with the gas, and drifted upward
smiling above pale hills of peace . . .
flakes of snow, a coldness tingling
fluttering free like rentreceipts

dawn; the papers shrill in warning:
government spending must decrease,
government spenders must desist . . .
decrease, desist
substantial citizens insist,
government;
government;
government,
cease

HERMAN SPECTOR.

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from the manufacturer. While each store sells individually, each owner buys cooperatively, getting the advantages of large-scale purchasing to compete with the price levels of the chain stores. Such cooperatives require very efficient and honest leadership, but they are not unknown in the United States and have helped in the solution of similar problems among the farmers. Moreover, the cooperative technique, despite its limitations under capitalism, is, in the very nature of the circumstances, progressive. It can render valuable service in overcoming the atomization and isolation of the individual little business men, bringing the strength of their organized power into the arena of progressive politics.

This brings us squarely upon the last, and possibly the most important, aspect of the little business program.

Clearly, the little man wants liquid credit, and we have proposed credit unions that will approach the government with practical plans. The little man wants nuisance taxes abolished, wants the sales tax ended, wants the chains themselves to be taxed, and we have shown that these things can be done through a program that will force big business to come across. The little man wants fair trade practices, some kind of floor on prices; he wants a way to beat the marketing advantages of the chains. And all these things are good.

But the open-sesame to the whole program can be summarized in one little word: *action.*

Unless the little business men will get together and *act* in their own defense, neither the elaborate architecture of a program, nor well-intentioned laws, nor support from other sections of the progressive population will do them very much good. Overcoming the faults of present organizations, their splintered and disunited character, the little man will have to come forward fighting. Taking the leadership out of the hands of chain-store executives, big business stooges, and peanut politicians, a new leadership is needed from the ranks of little business itself to do the job. Taking a leaf from the experience of professional organizations, and the trade unions . . . and yes, the techniques of big business itself, the little man must emerge from the economic orphanage to which he has been condemned.

These are the elements of a program that offers more than immediate relief to the little business man. Here is a program, which can, if crystallized in local and national activity, bring the little business man forward as a progressive force, part of the great front of the people, the living front that fights for progress and democracy.

★

Hitler Agrees

IT IS our belief that a major reason for the sorry pass in which Europe and the world now find themselves is due to the continuing intellectual prestige of the myths preached by Marx!!—EDITORIAL *in "Common Sense" [exclamation points by "New Masses"].*

Readers' Forum

Stool-Pigeon Banta

TO NEW MASSES: The workers in the New York City office of the Federal Writers Project have been treated to the spectacle of Trotskyites working hand in hand with a fascist spy and provocateur. Edwin P. Banta, the stool pigeon who testified to a mess of falsehoods about his fellow union-members in Local 1700 of the Workers Alliance, the writers' branch, is a typical Dies committee witness. Behind his mask of a meek and mild old man hides the crafty face of a Nazi agent. But it was the equally notorious Trotskyite, Ralph DeSola, who played the part of assistant to Banta at two critical moments in his relationship to the project and the union.

Two years ago Ralph DeSola, then a Trotskyist spy in the Communist Party, took Banta to a meeting and introduced him to fellow workers some of whom were members of the Communist Party. This introductory act of spying having been completed, DeSola recommended Banta for membership in the party and Banta was accepted. Subsequently, like his Trotskyite-Bukharinite fellow criminals in the Soviet Union, DeSola found supposed ideological differences with the Communist Party and was expelled for disruptive acts; but his fascist mate remained concealed, quietly worming his way into the confidence of his co-workers who were only too glad to sign their name on the fly leaf of a book at a union meeting—not, as Banta would make you believe, a Communist Party meeting.

Meantime Banta was a full-fledged stool and spy. He established connections with Mayor Hague's henchmen in New Jersey, introduced a Hearst agent into the writers' meetings, and communicated by letter and otherwise with these fascist leaders.

Banta also openly recruited for the fascists. In the spring of 1936 he was inviting fellow workers to attend meetings of the American Christian Church Union of which he was an organizer. This anti-foreign-born, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist organization held a meeting at Central High School at which speakers threatened Jews and Communists with machine guns if they didn't behave. Shortly thereafter inflammatory literature was distributed in front of union halls and numerous small riots broke out in which members of this organization participated.

Banta was dropped by the Federal Writers Project in June 1937. At this time he hypocritically appealed to the union for help in obtaining his reinstatement. He would not have been put back on the roles except for the pressure of certain reactionary interests in Washington, which, operating through a government office, wrote to the local administration requesting his reinstatement.

Incidentally, Banta was given special treatment by the project because of the fact that the Polyclinic Hospital and a doctor engaged by the project both testified that he was an old and mentally unstable man, as well as physically ill. In both cases authorities diagnosed his mental ailment as paranoia, one of the symptoms of which is delusions of grandeur. Such delusions may perhaps explain his accusation that Irving Nicholson, a mild and inoffensive but efficient writer was sent by the Communist Party to New Jersey to foment a revolution. The spectacle of Nicholson, who wears thick glasses and suffers from sinus trouble, single-handedly contesting the cohorts of Mayor Hague for the streets of Jersey City has sent Nicholson's fellow workers into gales of laughter.

Banta made his connections with the Nazi Bund in the course of his general spying activity. The open advertisement in the *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter* on September 15, proclaiming Banta's appearance as a speaker on "Behind the Scenes in Soviet-America" on September 20, capped the climax of his career.

Add to this the fact that on September 15 Ralph DeSola, avowed Trotskyite, appeared with Banta before the Dies committee, and the tale is told. DeSola pretended he was disillusioned with the Communist Party and the lack of democracy in the Soviet Union. Unwittingly he was exposing—like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and Trotsky—the inevitable link between Trotskyism and fascism. The line-up is clear and sharp. Mayor Hague, Hearst, the American Christian Church Union, the Nazi Bund, the Dies committee, Banta, DeSola—a perfect circle of infamy.

A WORKER ON THE WRITERS PROJECT.

New York City.

Workers School

TO NEW MASSES: May we call the attention of NEW MASSES readers to the very extensive educational program that has been undertaken by the New York Workers School (35 E. 12th St.) for this fall term. To celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the school more than forty subjects and over one hundred classes will be given during the coming term which starts October 3.

As Earl Browder has said, ". . . schools are mainly important as places that teach people how to study outside of school, and the task of each and every one of us is to study, study, study . . . You cannot properly direct any detailed work unless you are constantly increasing your knowlege and mastery of theory."

"To teach people how to study" is one of the aims of the Workers Schools throughout the United States. More than 3,500 people are expected to register for the fall term in New York alone. Registration has already begun and will continue till the first week in October.

Catalogues may be had on request. The fees for the courses are nominal. Every NEW MASSES reader will find the Workers School the place where the problems discussed weekly in NEW MASSES are placed in the proper historical category in the light of Marxist-Leninist theory and practice.

A. MARKOFF, Director
New York Workers School.

New York City.

Czechoslovakia

TO NEW MASSES: Maybe this letter will become historic. Maybe you will open it as the soldiers here open their cartridge belts. . . .

It is very dark in Central Europe, but perhaps this strange interlude between peace and war, which we are accustomed to call peace, will be saved for some weeks or even months. I write you only to say that nothing in the mind of the popular masses has changed. The Czech people are calm, prudent, and ready. The German anti-fascists and the Czechs in the Sudeten territory are simply heroes. Yesterday we took part in a great day of Czech and German brotherhood in the small Sudeten village of Hohlen. Twenty thousand German and Czech anti-fascists were there. It was one of the most emotional demonstrations I have ever seen. Against a background of danger, these twenty thousand men, women, boys, and girls were so strong and serene, so hopeful and resolute, that we all felt our hearts full of happiness and also of pain.

Prague, September 14. F. C. WEISKOPF.

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REVIEW AND COMMENT

Jack Lindsay, Historical Novelist

A RECENT NEW MASSES article by C. Day Lewis favorably mentioned Jack Lindsay's latest book (*1649: A Novel of a Year. Methuen Publishers, London, 10s*). The name Jack Lindsay may have sounded strange to American readers, although his father, Norman Lindsay, is well known over here as an illustrator. Jack Lindsay, who was born in Australia, now lives in Cornwall and Devonshire, and in England has a triple reputation as a left-wing poet, a translator of Latin literature, and an historical novelist. (His brother Philip is also an historical novelist.) As Lindsay is one of the most interesting of the socially conscious writers in the world today, his work deserves to be known by more than British readers, and it was fitting that C. Day Lewis call him to the attention of Americans.

One of the first interests Lindsay expressed in his work was in Roman civilization. His trilogy of novels of the days of Julius Cæsar (*Rome for Sale, Cæsar Is Dead, Last Days with Cleopatra*) did not exhaust his interest in the general subject of Rome; the fictional work was strengthened and deepened by such studies as the biography *Marc Antony* and the series of translations called *I Am a Roman,* an unusual anthology which attempted to trace the principal motives of the Roman spirit and their effect upon the social and cultural development of Europe. Lindsay carried on his Roman interests with a novel of the empire, *Despoiling Venus,* and his work continued organically with a volume of translations, *Medieval Latin Poets.* Lindsay had not yet torn himself away from Italy, and his novel, *Adam of a New World,* had a Venetian setting.

By the time he had decided to write of England he was already thoroughly familiar with the long story of another civilization to contrast with it. So far he has written principally on seventeenth-century themes. It is typical of his method that his explorations into the period he is working on stretch beyond fiction and it is not surprising to find him writing a life of Bunyan. This book was published in 1937, as was *Sue Verney,* a novel of that period. Last year also saw the publication of a quite different volume, *Anatomy of Spirit,* which Lindsay's publishers class as "sociology"—it is a study of the problems of modern man, and a discussion of Freudian doctrines in relation to Marxism.

Sue Verney, which points the way to the subject-matter of *1649,* was suggested by Lady Verney's *Memoirs of the Verney Family During the Civil War.* At one level *Sue Verney* is a sprightly novel about a somewhat typical girl of the Cavalier tradition who marries a man in debt, shares his prison bed with him (in the Tower of London), and upon his release devotes all her energies to building up his ruined estate. But there are deep social implications which the outline of the story can but barely suggest; it may be explained that these in no way impair the value of the story as a story—Lindsay has too great a knack of making the past live in all its little daily manifestations. He has a warm feeling for the masses, and if the pathos of the decay of knightly families takes up the forespace of this book, the background belongs to the poor farmers and crushed townsmen who are the real victims of the social change of the Great Rebellion. Lindsay follows up these implications in *1649;* the Civil War did not bring land and bread to the dispossessed. It was one of the first large-scale struggles in the birth of modern capitalism: the overthrow of the Stuarts resulted in the triumphant ascendancy of the business man.

Lindsay really finds himself as a novelist in *Sue Verney.* While it has some of the novelese touches that in places weakened the Roman stories, it also has a clearer destination and a finer total display of writing. And in *1649,* Jack Lindsay comes in full-sail. For those who enjoy a good, swift historical narrative that lacks most of the historical-novel cliches, and those who are interested in dramatized accounts of the development of revolutionary strategy, *1649* is a book to be investigated.

It does not deal with the actual events of the Rebellion, but with their aftermath. Beginning with the execution of Charles I, the story covers about one (new style) calendar year, with divisions for each month and subdivisions for the activities of the various characters, who are presented in a technique somewhat similar to that used in what is called the collective novel over here. There are about a dozen main characters, taken from different social levels; most of them know the others, but their lives are connected by the national destiny more than by individual ties. The year 1649 was a year bristling with events: the King's death, the Irish campaign, the mutiny of the Levellers, the trial and acquittal of their leader, John Lilburne. The change and confusion of the year make an effective background for the story, for behind these events there are Royalist intrigues, there is bribery that spreads from the lowest prisons to the government offices at Whitehall, there is the opportunism of the mercantile classes seeking to keep the power in the hands of the Cromwellian clique, which had become reactionary. Jack Lindsay is well schooled in the knowledge of these things and knows how to interpret them: he evidently knows Weber and Tawney as well as Marx.

Charles Martin

The true heroes of the book are the Levellers, that heroic band of early democrat-communists that rose out of the Rebellion. The Levellers were first called by name in a letter of November 1647 which says in part: "they have given themselves a new name, *viz,* Levellers, for they intend to set all things straight, and rayse a parity and community in the kingdom." Prof. Theodore Calvin Pease of the University of Illinois, who has written the definitive book, *The Leveller Movement,* traces the beginning of the Levellers' political ideas back to the religious controversies of 1641-46; these controversies filled the future Levellers "with a dread of government's forcing the nation to conform to a state church, whether Presbyterian or Erastian. If we are to understand the full significance of the Leveller movement, we must imagine the fear of the intolerant Presbyterian hierarchy as always present in the mind of Lilburne and his followers." Men like Colonel Rainsborough, who died prematurely, and Lilburne, who in his youth had tasted tyranny when he had been pilloried, fined, and whipped through the streets for criticizing the previous regime —men like this, who had fought in the New Model army, helped to establish the Leveller Party. After Archbishop Laud and the King were put to death and their government abolished, the rank and file of men who had fought for freedom found that the people were still a long way from realized liberty. Cromwell and his colleagues were members of the rising mercantile class or of the new oligarchy of landlords, and the truly democratic Levellers were justified in their suspicions of them. More than a year after he had crushed the

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Levellers, Cromwell's hatred of them was still boiling, and in a speech to Parliament he revealed his bias:

> A nobleman, a gentleman, a yeoman; "the distinction of these": that is a good interest of the nation, and a great one! The "natural" magistry of the nation, was it not almost trampled under foot, under despite and contempt, by men of Levelling principles? I beseech you, for the orders of men and the ranks of men, did not that Levelling principle tend to reducing all to an equality? Did "consciously" think to do so; or did it "only unconsciously" practice towards it for property and interest? "At all events," what was the purport of it but to make the tenant as liberal a fortune as the landlord? Which, I think, if obtained, would not have lasted long! The men of that principle, after they had served their own turns, would have cried up interest and property *then* fast enough! This instance is instead of many. And that this thing did "and might well" extend far, is manifest; because it was a pleasing voice to all Poor Men, and truly not unwelcome to all Bad Men.

This quotation is from the Lomas edition of Carlyle, who after the last sentence had added a parenthesis: "Far-extended classes, these two both!"

We have Cromwell's attitude revealed in his own words; and Lindsay's story essentially is that of the struggle between this attitude and that of the "men of Levelling principles." But to tell this story, Lindsay tells many others relating to it; he is aware of it not as a simple, isolated thing, but as part of the social complex. The people in the book have a living interest which serves to illuminate the historical events from within, and humanize them. The character to appear most consistently is Ralph Lydcot, a veteran of the Roundhead army who had become a Leveller. Before the year is out he becomes an example of the *trahison des clercs:* he is, after all, the son of the grasping merchant Isaac Lydcot, and upon making an opportunistic marriage he abandons Lilburne and his cause, though he still guiltily insists he is a sympathizer. But Ralph's friends—Roger Cotton, the bookseller's apprentice, and Will Scamler, the yeoman's son (who never meet during the course of the story)—are of different stuff, and at the end they are still left fighting. They have the proletarian heritage, and once they have been awakened they know there is no other way out of their enforced predicament than fighting for solidarity. Roger, wrapped in religion at first and uninterested in political occurrences, comes to share the experiences of the Diggers, or "True Levellers," the literal and peace-loving offshoot of the movement, who are driven cruelly out of their collective farm in Surrey.

It perhaps does Lindsay an injustice to use today's terminology in making a rapid summary of a few of the problems dealt with in his book, which merely narrates what happens and avoids generalizations and the catchwords we use in speaking of these matters. Occasionally, however, the way he narrates things has a flavor of today, and the secret meetings sometimes sound a bit too much like underground cells in the Berlin of the present. But writing at this remove, with our accumulated knowledge, it is almost impossible to avoid pointing up some of the material. It must be said in Lindsay's favor that he avoids this more than most historical novelists, and seems to get very close to the feeling of the period. As in *Sue Verney,* the atmosphere is excellently contrived. The jail scenes are not easily forgotten, the prisoners of the Commonwealth writhing in filth and being beaten with a bull's pizzle by a cruel keeper—you had to buy your food from the jailer in those days, and you had to give him a tip even for news of your release. (The jail scenes in *Sue Verney* form an interesting contrast in that they show a landowner's comparatively easy plight—the prisons in *1649* reveal the lot of the common people in captivity.) The description of the London streets and the countryside are unusually good, with true poetic touches, and the properties are unobtrusively arranged.

Ruben Perez

Will Scamler is the most admirable of the characters who walk through this skillful reconstruction of the daily life of that year. He usually lacks party contacts and has to carry on most of his work as an individualist, practically as a nihilist, yet he is eventually able to do his part as a member of a community, when he organizes the Yarmouth fishermen to fight for their rights. The actual historical personages who appear are mostly the Leveller leaders, such as Lilburne, Overton, and Walwyn. These three are brought sparsely to life, but the soldiers Thompson and Lockyer seem too barely characterized for such interesting men, for men who had so great an influence among their fellow-soldiers. Of course it is one of the drawbacks of the collective novel that it often prevents character and psychological development—the people have to fit a pattern, their exits and entrances are governed by outer necessity, and their behavior has to be controlled accordingly. Fortunately Cromwell never appears directly—and here the advantages of the method become apparent, because Cromwell can be an offstage character or can be seen occasionally at the edge of the action (as when he and Fairfax are glimpsed for a moment as the mutiny is being put down at the Black Bull in Bishopsgate) and yet be predominant as a social influence. Cromwell as a principal character would steal the stage from these representatives of the common people whose lives Lindsay wants to probe, and the method he uses can keep his own characters in the front of the reader's attention, while Cromwell's power is all the more strongly emphasized by the social pattern of the novel, which shows that power at work at all different levels. Cromwell, it must be remembered, was not a fascist, despite the present glorification of him in fascist countries, and Lindsay does not attempt to make him one. His Cromwell is rather conceived in the spirit of the title of one of the latest books on Cromwell, Maurice Ashley's *The Conservative Dictator.* But it cannot be denied that Cromwell used tactics similar to those of the fascists when he stamped out the Levellers.

Jack Lindsay is now writing a 200,000-word *People's History of Culture,* and is planning a novel of the days of John Wilkes, the eccentric eighteeenth-century champion of liberty and reform who became Lord Mayor of London. It is indisputable that Jack Lindsay is a novelist worth watching, and it is time some American publisher seriously took him up. An admirable book to begin with would be *1649: A Story of a Year,* for it demonstrates how vivid and forceful the historical novel can be when skillfully built along social lines.

HARRY THORNTON MOORE.

Nazi Mythology

THE WAR AGAINST THE WEST, *by Aurel Kolnai. Viking Press. $4.*

WHEN the counter-revolution of 1933 ravaged Germany like a beast of prey, liberal thinkers of all countries were at a loss to explain its peculiar character. Those who were horrified by its ferocity ignored its economic and political meaning, its relation to Italian fascism, to the general crisis of monopoly capitalism. For them, Nazism was defined in terms of the personality of Hitler, the sadistic lust of Germans, anti-Semitism, the ambitions of "radical, patriotic" under-officers in the army, or the desperate honor of a humiliated people, smarting under Versailles.

Others, seeing its reactionary basis, tried to equate Berlin with Rome, as though Hitler were a German Mussolini, whose ideology was so much posturing to fool his disciples and terrify the Social Democrats. After power was secured, the trusts safe for Thyssen and the land for the Junkers, capital would resume its normal course of exploitation.

Marxists alone saw in the Nazi triumph neither a temporary derangement of the Ger-

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man mind nor a simple, abstract episode of the class struggle, masked by slogans of race and blood. They warned that while German fascism exhibited the forms which reaction would take in any country—suppression of trade unions and freedom of expression, self-justification by a theory of "elites," i.e., natural superiors, arrogant imperialism, and permanent organization for war—it had developed special features which threatened not only the peace of the USSR, France, and England, but the foundations of the civilized world.

Masks are called "false faces." But Nazi ideology is no false face. It is so perfect a mask because most people dare not think how well it fits the face that wears it. The old face of German counter-revolution, of agrarian feudalism, hardened by hundreds of years of struggle against its own people, its "subjects," equipped with the material weapons of modern capitalism, confronts the democratic nations today. Those who say, "The beast of prey is the highest form of human life" (Spengler), and "Happiness, liberty, equality, the rights of man, these are the phantoms soaked with chaos" (Erich Jung) now offer their supreme contribution to the West—war which "elevates the landscape," class war "from above, waged by the masters against the insurgent mob," and foreign war which "provides the ground on which the human soul may manifest itself at its fullest height, in richer forms, and surging from more profound wells than it might in any scientific or artistic exploit as such" (Prof. E. Banse). Let it be understood that the bombs falling on Spanish women and children, the poison gas ready for Czechoslovakia, are not a regrettable necessity of foreign conflict but rather the highest expression of the Aryan spirit.

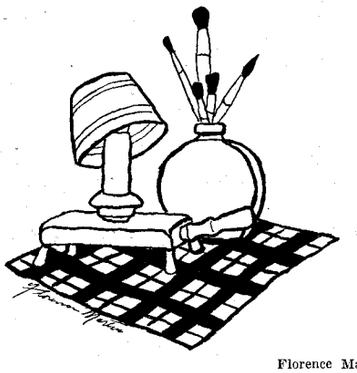
Kolnai studies the roots and flowering of the Nazi genius from the standpoint of a liberal Catholic. He attempts to show that this genius expresses itself in a revival of tribal mind and society, in which identity and personality are submerged in the group, and the chief and leaders have absolute power as incarnations of the "spirit of the people" rather than of the wishes of single or even a majority of individuals. Kolnai's anthropology may be called into question here; the analogy insults primitive society, of which fascist social theory is an anachronistic parody. (Another, minor objection may be made to some rather naive quotations from Kipling and Noyes, supposed to illustrate that British imperialism at least found morality an asset instead of a hindrance to its aims.)

He is concerned more with the ethical implications than with the historical bases for the mystical philosophy of the absolute, hierarchal state held in common by thinkers of the stature of Hegel and snobs like the flunkey Othmar Spann. ("The great mass of people are merely united in the pool of sensual and vital life. The fabric of urges, vegetative life, are predominant with those whose processes of association develop in public houses, at vulgar home parties, at popular amusements, in cinemas, in varieties with Negro dances and the like.")

Kolnai's purpose is to show that fascism, particularly National Socialism, constitutes a complete negation of the rights of man, of humanity, of the entire moral structure of the West, of liberal Christianity, and of every spiritual assertion of Western culture. Thus he observes that the anti-Communist crusade is not pursued against the Soviet Union or the party alone, but against these mainly, because they carry to their historical conclusion the French and Russian Revolutions which, according to the Nazi ideologist, H. A. Grunsky, "have placed so much degenerated will and energy in the service of unnatural ideas and brutal instincts" and "are landmarks of liberalistic education in actual politics." This fantastic "transvaluation of values" is the essence of what Kolnai calls the war against the West.

Indeed, the fantastic occupies a unique place in German history. Its chief representative is the Hero, actually the useless, outdated landlord turned brigand or Nordic Don Quixote of whom Friedrich Hebbel long ago wittily remarked that his slogan was "A piece of bread I'll not give you, but my life, with pleasure!" The myth figure of the Hero is the highest product of a class which, in order to justify its existence, had to reverse all human values, to preach violence for its own sake, to create an art of tyranny, to invent artificial hierarchies of races and types, and to renounce science and society for the sake of a Kultur in which military caste organization assumes the place of the fine arts. The job of equating myth with reality was turned over to numbers of idealist philosophers and poets to whom lying was simply "intuition, the life of the soul," hijacking was true Socialism, and homosexuality a branch of politics.

Goebbels once said that National Socialism was the "true survival and continuation of Prussiandom," i.e., of East Elbian feudal autocracy. He might have been a little more grateful to those Aryan capitalists who elevated him to be one of themselves. The wedding of feudal romance and modern imperialism is celebrated by many noble sentiments in Nazi apologetics (a word which should not be thought to imply modesty). Here are a few examples: An injunction to German bankers—"Financiers of Teutonic race, repose your power in Vikings, not in freedmen!"



Florence Martin

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A German Christian discovery—"The Blessed Virgin is a vital and ethnical sex deity." The philosophy of mathematics—"Two-times-two-equal-four is somehow differently tinged in the minds of a German, a Frenchman, and a Negro." A lesson in ethics—"A wild people despises a tame one, the latter taking its revenge by morals."

These are not the ravings of cranks but the considered utterances of respectable professors of philosophy and law. It is to such depths that a ruling class descends when, starting with an assumption of almost biological inferiority in the working class, it erects a hierarchy of "aristocrats" whose lower orders compensate for their debasement by being privileged to degrade others. The lowest members of the nation are given the gloomy satisfaction of despising other races and citizens of nations about to be attacked. This is how the "ancient order of slavery" is supposed to be "biologically founded and preservable."

Time and time again, as one reads, one remembers—and one is certain that millions of Geman workers will also remember—the great words of Lenin: ". . . striving for Socialism, we are convinced that it will develop further into Communism, and, side by side with this, there will vanish all need for force, for the subjection of one man to another, of one section of society to another, since people will grow accustomed to observing the elementary conditions of social existence without force and without subjection."

CLARENCE WEINSTOCK.

Savage Aristocrat

BLOODY BARON, *by Vladimir Pozner. Translated by Warre Bradley Wells. Random House. $2.50.*

VLADIMIR POZNER'S story of the bloody baron, Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, a Baltic landowner who became a White Russian commander in Mongolia, is a romantic tale of border warfare and the intrigues of Japanese imperialism. Baron Ungern was one of those called by Richard Harding Davis "the d'Artagnans of history," and in temperament, in fact, resembled the American William Walker, who became President of Nicaragua; not a hothead, though, but a fanatic of social hierarchies, a man of savage, solitary, and austere temper who carried to the point of mysticism the idea that the aristocrats were born under God to rule and the masses to work. The bloody baron, reproved for his brutality in Urga, capital of Mongolia, is able to write to the Chinese general, Lu-Chang-Ku:

> It is not without commiseration that I think of the Chinese blood that has been shed and which, no doubt, will be attributed to my cruelty; on the other hand, I am positive that every soldier should consider it his duty to root out every revolutionist, whatever his nationality, for they are no less than evil spirits in human shape . . .

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papers, the fading memories of exiled White Russians, letters and dispatches captured with Baron Ungern, and textbooks of those national histories in which the warriors of many generations of Ungern-Sternbergs played a part. The Ungerns (they say) hail from before the ninth century, and according to themselves, knew Noah to speak to. They belonged to the "Four of the Fist," an affectionate title for the leading Baltic families: on their escutcheon is centered a second shield bearing a star on a mountain top. Roman believed in this star; it was "the heart and the abyss" of the family bearings.

He left the Corps of Pages in Petersburg, went to fight in the Russo-Japanese war, and from then on believed his star was in the East. Like most aristocrats he believed implicitly in the whims of fortune tellers, and went on to greater superstitions, to belief in reincarnation, in the Living Buddha, in the reappearance of a great Mongol Khan with young hordes, to tear through the pages of sottish modern history, refresh the West. To this end he cooperated with the Chinese counter-revolutionists, the Japanese, became one of the "spearheads" of their penetration of Mongolia. Supreme Regent Kolchak and Ataman Semionov failed, and saw their troops melt away before the organization of the Bolsheviks and Red Armies of the Far East. A little later, Baron Ungern, deserted by the Japanese, distrusting all, distrusted by all, saw his "extremely well-disciplined troops" turn into shadows under the "flat-nosed Mongolian moon," and was himself captured by the Bolsheviks.

Here is a true story, told with the much-polished simplicity, the poetry and humor of folklore. The book, including the vivid campaign scenes and the quite sympathetic picture of the bloody baron is written in the popular style of reportage, in self-contained chapters. This would give a piecemeal effect, were it not that history, more than personalities, causes the story to move; and at moments the ancient moon, the desert, the wind seem to bear armies along; and all these again are fragments of an old world being ground into new shape between the vigorous new Russian state and the persistently ambitious new Japanese imperialism; these two things finally emerge as the forces that guide revolts of peasants, idleness of llamas, ecstasies of adventurers, the luxury of the Living Buddha, the thousand personal heroisms of everyday.

It is an irritating essay, a sort of prelude to the opera that is going on today; part of the unwritten history of two decades ago is set forth with a craftsmanlike clarity that would transfer easily to the films. As to the character of Ungern, Pozner calls him a "feudalist" or "the missing link between feudalism and fascism," strayed into the twentieth century. However that may be, it is sure that such men will give their last drop of blood for reaction, while property remains and mortgages harass bluebloods, and in that they are most modern types.

The translation is smoothly done. It is a pity that modern publishing cannot, or will not, bring out books like this at a price to suit the young workers who would want to read them.

CHRISTINA STEAD.

Refugee Problem

REFUGEES: ANARCHY OR ORGANIZATION, *by Dorothy Thompson. Random House. $1.*

THIS timely essay dealing with the tragic problem of the refugees was written by the other Dorothy Thompson. Those who have followed the career of the *Herald Tribune's* political commentator have become increasingly aware that there are two distinct facets in the character of Miss Thompson. One is that of the anti-New Deal writer for the leading Republican newspaper. The other is the champion of democracy and the bitter foe of Hitlerism and fascism.

In *Refugees* Miss Thompson, the liberal, champions the cause of millions of men and women whom the fascists, through ostracism, pogroms, forced suicide, and actual murder have driven to exile and death. To be sure, Miss Thompson is unable to draw any distinction between the Soviet Union and the fascist countries, as she is unable to grasp the economic basis for racial discrimination. But it may well be argued that in so brief a book, the ground cannot be quite fully covered.

Aptly, the subtitle is *Anarchy or Organization.* And it is in the "organization" part of the problem that Miss Thompson suggests a practical solution of this desperate situation. The seriousness of the approach eliminates any pretense to originality. The essay is a brief history of the origin of the problem, the feeble attempts at solution, and, finally, a suggestion for organization of the necessary relief.

In the chapter called "This Empty World" she shows that, contrary to present impressions, it is feasible to make room for and to house the homeless millions, and also to offer them the fullest economic opportunity, provided the relief is organized with the cooperation of all the governments of the world. If colonization is to be successful, she states, expert planning in advance is required, and a considerable outlay of capital. All the settlements, she points out, which failed during the last twenty years failed for lack of planning, or lack of funds, or both.

Helen Ludwig

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The author's practical program for solution is the suggestion of an associate of the late Fridtjof Nansen, Mr. Moritz Schlesinger, and is conceived on a grandiose plan. That plan presupposes, unfortunately, an understanding and desire to cooperate on the part of the fascist states. After reading it, one arrives at the sad conclusion that if the fascist dictatorships were open to an appeal to reason, the oppression and exile of "non-Aryans" would cease, and there would be no need for a financial scheme involving millions and millions of pounds.

In brief, Miss Thompson pleads for realism among the populations of the democratic states, for partial abandonment of the boycott, the supplying of valuta to the fascist states, as a consideration for the release of the immigrants, who would be permitted to depart with some of their money in the form of capital goods, in order to establish themselves in those places which exist in "The Still Empty World." As an example, Miss Thompson assumes that $30,000,000 would be needed for fifty thousand refugees. When we consider the enormity of the problem, fifty thousand people seems to be a relatively small number. Miss Thompson shows that fifty thousand refugees would fill twenty-five big steamers to the last berth; that immense means would be needed for equipment, household goods, tools, etc., in order for that number to build a community of frontier life of the twentieth century. She aptly says that pioneer life in our day, to be successful, is not comparable to that of fifty years ago. To be effective, a modern pioneer community must be equipped with gas, water, electricity, schools, decent housing, and modern facilities.

To effectuate such a scheme, it is suggested that an "international resettlement company" be created; that the immigrant countries (Germany, for instance) shall put at its disposal all the blocked currency, which would then be discounted at 50 percent. In the case of Germany that sum of 100,000,000 blocked marks is valued by the German government at $40,000,000, although it is admitted that outside of Germany the value of the blocked mark is 5 cents. Parenthetically, it should be noted that the German government would thus immediately make a substantial profit. But assuming that the democratic countries were willing to pay this ransom to fascism for the release of fifty thousand persons, who could be settled in productive work in uncongested areas, the price would not be too high.

Immediately, however, other objections suggest themselves. Since Miss Thompson wrote this book, Italy has come out with a drive against the Jews, and about forty thousand potential victims have been added to the list of the proscribed.

May not the result, then, be that the Red Cross work undertaken out of the humanitarian despair and pity by the democratic countries would supply a premium for fascist despotism? This query is not asked in a capricious spirit. The problem is so vast that one's imagination and courage falter in approaching it. The solution offered by Miss Thompson is now partially being applied in the settlement of the German Jews in Palestine and has been successful on a minor scale. Nor is it to be understood that the author is dogmatic in her suggestion. Many combinations of the examples given for financing the settlement of fifty thousand German refugees are possible. And she cites as another possibility that $25,000,000 of interest on unpaid war debts supplied by the debtor countries to the United States might be turned over to the proposed international-resettlement company.

No reasonable person can depreciate Miss Thompson's work against the fascist aggressors and her plea for the oppressed Jews. But one wishes that this brilliant advocacy would express itself within a framework of a deeper knowledge of historic forces at play.

CHARLES RECHT.

The "Well Made" Novel

TIDES OF MONT ST.-MICHEL, *by Roger Vercel. Translated from the French By W. B. Wells. Random House. $2.50.*

THE French can write the "well made" novel as easily as the well made play, and Roger Vercel is a master of the craft. A few years ago he produced a tailored melodramatic novel of love and brutality in time of war. *Tides of Mont St.-Michel* is a tailored idyll of country life. In fact, it is a novel of propaganda in favor of Agrarianism. Country life, or, to be quite accurate, life on the mount of Saint Michael, on the shore of the beautiful, dangerous sea that beats at its foot, is the cure for the havoc wrought by social unrest and financial losses.

André Brelot was formerly a middle-class business man of good social standing. Having lost his money, he has swallowed his pride and accepted a government sinecure of the humble order of guide to the old monastic church of Henry Adams' worship. Though he does not till the soil or earn his living by fishing, he comes to feel that the villagers who do have caught the secret of the happy life. These sturdy peasants know how to survive the treacherous quicksands and the quickly descending fog, and drink a complacent glass of wine at the inn. Even nature herself, in Vercel, is "middle of the road," not so fair as in Wordsworth nor so foul as in Thomas Hardy. But his hero has the added satisfaction of understanding and loving the fabric of the tall, columned church he serves. Its beauty, ever changing and ever present, he accepts as a living companion, taken casually without the bother of historical research. But his wife proves less flexible, and eventually leaves him to his peasants and his cathedral.

And there he will doubtless stay, oblivious to the problems of contemporary France until they effect a cut in the budget for the support of ancient monuments or afford evidence that there are more sinister tides than those of the sea.

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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

A Drama Critic Goes On Record

THEATER critics, except for those weighty gentlemen who write about Trends for the monthly magazines, ought to be utilitarian.

Readers want to know, without too much fuss and feathers, "Is it a good show? Will I like it? Is it worth my dollar-ten for a balcony seat the fourth week of the run? Should I see it during my brief vacation in New York or when it goes on tour?"

Theater critics, I think, should answer these questions as simply and directly as they can. I make this clear, because until last week I was an earnest but amateur theater-lover, paying my own way into Broadway shows.

Now, making my debut as NEW MASSES theater critic, I think it's only fair that I put down on paper the elusive standards by which I hope to answer the fatal questions, "Is it good? Will I like it?" for the 1938-39 Broadway season.

In the first place, on the delicate question of "left-wing" theater: Because a play is well intentioned, I don't think it's necessarily good. Strike dramas can be inept and dreadful. Earnest theater groups can turn out shoddy productions.

But I want to be frankly on record in favor of "left-wing" theater. Plays that at least try to deal with questions of modern life in honest and courageous fashion interest me about 200 percent more than the best drawing-room comedy. I know I won't be able to help leaning over backwards for the plays the "left-wing" theater produces this year. I would much rather sit through three bad acts of a stumbling but provocative play than moon through three more or less competent acts of some lavender and old lace conjured up for the carriage trade. But that isn't to say that I won't call the three bad acts bad—only I may add, go see it anyway, it's worth it.

And probably I will save my loudest cheers and most enthusiastic whooplas for the "left-wing" theater that is honestly good—and last year, if that's any sign, turned up several plays, like the memorable *Plant in the Sun,* which were swell.

About classic Broadway comedies: Just because a play isn't class-conscious is not to say that NEW MASSES readers won't like it. I laughed myself sick at *You Can't Take It With You,* some eons ago when it opened, and if another one as good as that turns up, you'll find me labeling it four stars. Of course the only way I know how to tell whether or not a play is funny is how many times it makes me laugh. Lots of Broadway comedies make me feel sad and forlorn instead of vice versa, and I intend to say so.

About "serious" drama: Any play that discusses an important problem, whether confused, or downright incorrect or not, deserves serious consideration. I may not agree with the conclusions playwrights reach, but I will recommend such plays to NEW MASSES readers anyway, with reservations clearly set down, of course.

About Shakespeare: I am definitely a Shakespeare fan, and consider it a rich and beautiful season on Broadway when we have lots of it. I saw the Mercury Theater's *Julius Caesar* twice last season and would like to have seen it more.

And about revivals: I saw Fred Stone in *Lightnin'* last week. The play has a strong odor of moth-balls but Mr. Stone is engaging as the gentle drunk who outwits the city slickers trying to rob the women-folk.

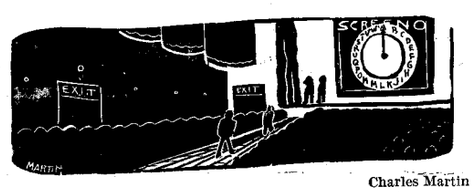
Lightnin' ran 1,291 performances back after the war, which seems very surprising now, with *Tobacco Road* piling up the big totals for the present decade. I thought *Lightnin'* was pretty dull on the whole. Recommended for your gentle old grandmother.

But definitely not for any aged relatives: *Come Across,* an American gangster play straight from a long run on its native heath, London. Very slight stuff.

RUTH MCKENNEY.

Renoir's Great War Film

JEAN RENOIR, a personage as important in the film as his father was in painting (you can see young Jean clasping his mother's arm in *The Renoir Family* by Pierre Auguste Renoir in the Barnes collection at Merion, Pa.), has written and directed a great film about the World War. *Grand Illusion,* opening the French season at the Filmarte, New York, is, to my knowledge, the best of all war pictures. Indeed, it comes provocatively close to the stature of the best literature of the war, recalling the grave mood of *Sergeant Grischa,* the humanity of *Under Fire,* and the beauty of incident of *Three Soldiers* and *The Enormous Room.* Jean Renoir has his father's inability to distrust mankind, coupled with a searching insight into character. He believes in the nobility of man and he hates the traps laid for men by their stupid conditions of life —classes and castes, boundaries and nationalism, are in the way of human brotherhood.



Charles Martin

The setting of *Grand Illusion,* although it is a pertinent picture about that great war that brought all of the seething tides of imperialist society into a bloody resolution, is removed from the battlefields. It is as though the story-teller must recoil from the thing itself to grasp its meaning.

In the officer's quarters of German Prison Camp No. 17, whose tranquillity is broken now and again by the parade stomp of German conscripts drilling in the court or the outcries of the prisoner in solitary, Renoir sets his story. Two French flying officers, Maréchal, a Parisian mechanic (Jean Gabin), and de Boeldieu, an aristocratic career man (Pierre Fresnay), are interned here after they have been shot down by von Rauffenstein, a German aristocrat (Eric von Stroheim). The prisoners are put in comfortable quarters with other French officers: the wealthy Rosenthal (Dalio), a surveyor (Gaston Modot), and a school teacher (Edouard Daste) who loves the Greek poet Pindar.

The weary calendar of prison life begins. The surveyor has started a tunnel to freedom. Rosenthal shares the food he receives from Paris despite the war. The inmates give a touching amateur theatrical in which the English, dressed as chorus girls, sing *Tipperary* before the stony presence of the high command of the camp. The day before the tunneling operation is scheduled to break through outside the walls, the announcement comes that they are to be transferred to another prison. As they line up for a last roll-call, new English prisoners arrive, loaded down with luggage which includes, in a delicious Gallic gibe, many tennis rackets. Maréchal breaks ranks to tell an English officer about the tunnel. As he is being chased back into line the Briton is saying, "Sorry, old chap, I don't understand French. *Bon voyage, bon voyage.*"

A long train-ride, rolling over the plains, deeper and deeper into Germany, brings them to the impregnable medieval fortress of Win-

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tersborn, commanded by the same von Rauffenstein who shot them down. Now von Rauffenstein is a fellow exile, relegated to the boresome tour of duty at Wintersborn by terrible wounds—burned from neck to foot, a silver kneecap, and his neck and chin in a brace because of a broken back. In this distant backwash of war, the unfit and the captives are thrown together in a painful discard. Von Rauffenstein extends exceptional courtesies to one captive among these French, English, and Russian officers—the highborn de Boeldieu, who feels an affinity for the German that he cannot extend to his fellow captives from the French petty bourgeoisie. "May I ask you one question?" says de Boeldieu one day in the chapel of the fortress. "Why do you make an exception of me? Maréchal and Rosenthal are also officers." Von Rauffenstein turns stiffly in his brace. "Maréchal and Rosenthal? A pretty gift from the French Revolution," he says. "I don't know who will win this war but I know it is the end of our kind."

The captives plan to escape and de Boeldieu volunteers to cover their flight by distracting the guards. "It will amuse me," he tells Maréchal and Rosenthal. When he is dying after being shot by von Rauffenstein, he says, "It is horrible when a common soldier dies in war; for us it is the best way out."

Maréchal and Rosenthal flee two hundred miles by night, sleeping in ditches and sustaining themselves with sugar cubes. Rosenthal twists his ankle and lags behind. The tension bursts and Maréchal abandons his companion after a bitter quarrel. The Jew sits on the ground and hurls Yiddish insults after Maréchal. The mechanic quietly comes back, helps Rosenthal to his feet, and, without a word, they travel on. They come to a farmhouse where they are hidden by a German peasant woman (Dita Parlo) who has been widowed at Verdun. For a few days they have happiness and the lonely woman finds love in Maréchal. Maréchal learns a few stumbling words of German; although he has been eighteen months in a German prison camp, he had learned not a word. He learns to pick up the beautiful little daughter of the household and tell her, *"Lotte hat blaue Augen."* But they must go on toward Switzerland. The war is a grand illusion, but we must win it, says Maréchal. Finally they are seen toiling up a white slope in Switzerland, free again for the chains.

Renoir has scorned stereotyped characters. His German jailers are kindly men, victims of the same illusion as their prisoners. It is this generous suggestion that has earned Renoir's picture the ban of Hitler and Mussolini. Germans are not human beings, Hitler has implied. The iron shoe is on the other foot; Der Führer has affirmed for the German character all of the grotesque Hunnishness that von Stroheim used to portray in American jingo pictures.

The censors have risen to noble heights by leaving the picture intact, although some of the interesting speeches are untranslated. The dialogue is in French, German, English,

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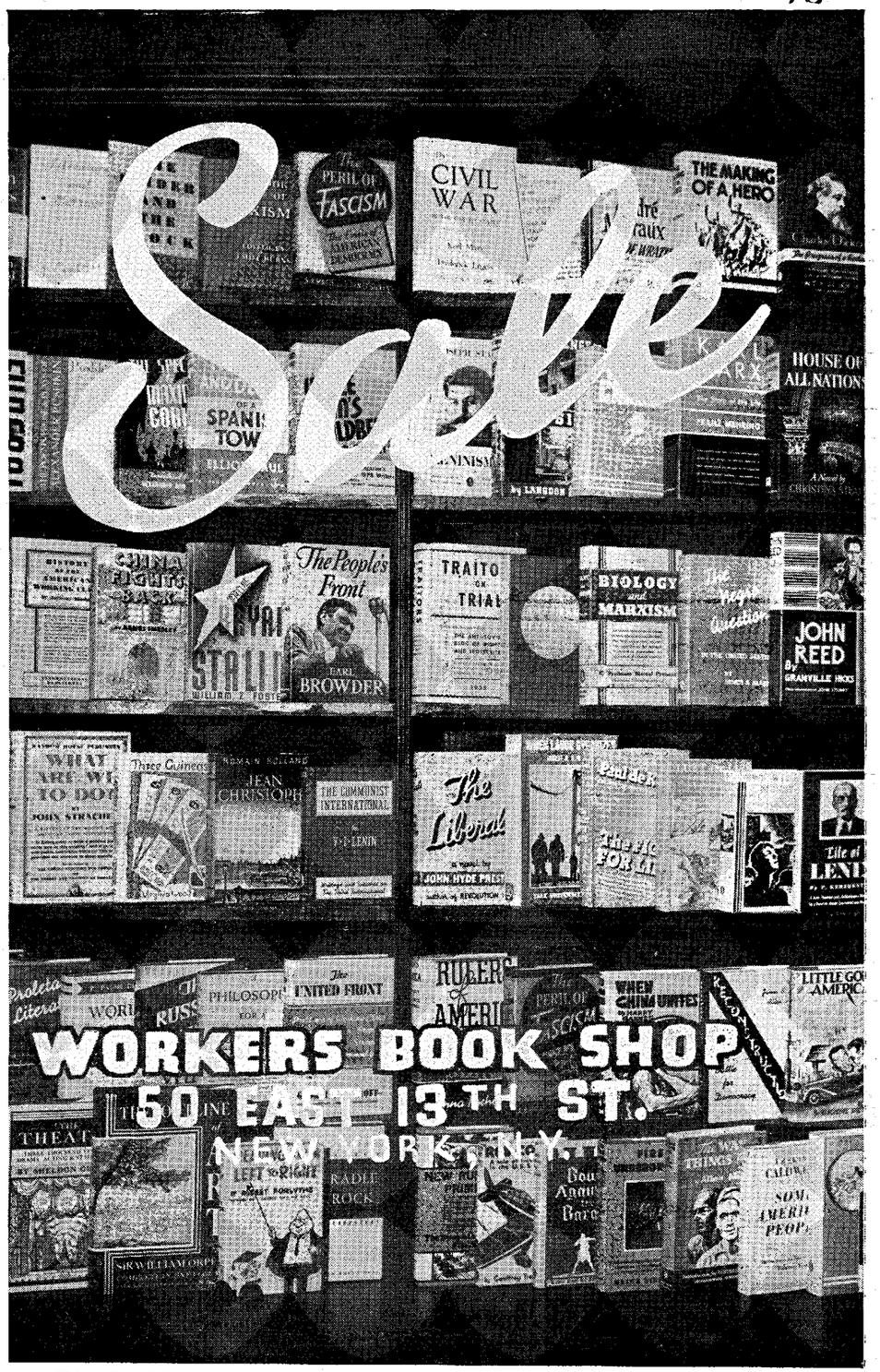

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and Russian, an appropriate device in such a remarkable picture. The cameraman, Claude Renoir, has done magnificent work with his material. The story was constructed from Renoir's interviews with veterans of German prison camps. Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, Dalio, and von Stroheim give performances which can confidently be called perfect. In her small footage, the diminutive actress Dita Parlo registers still another great performance.

THE first work in years of the famous Soviet director, Pudovkin, is distinctly not his best. *Mother and Sons* is a tale of Soviet aviation with the veteran character actress, Korchagina-Alexandrovskaya (who is, I believe, also a member of the Supreme Soviet), enacting a mother of two flyers, one of whom is forced down on a stratosphere flight around the world. The other son is anxious to join the hunt for his brother but is cautioned by his superior officer to think of his mother, who could not afford to lose two sons. But mother is the new Soviet model and she tells the officer a thing or two about trying to scare her boy with such talk. Brother finds brother in the Bering Sea, and the picture ends with a great fete at the Moscow airdrome when the rescue expedition returns. Alexandrovskaya gives one of the year's outstanding performances as the doughty old lady, but the script contains no other opportunities for telling performances, being pretty much filled with heroic flyers rather than well realized characters. The good things in the picture also include some stunning photography of the sea, reminding you of Pudovkin's old silent masterpieces, a good deal of genial Soviet humor and satire, and a clever mixture of newsreel shots of Soviet leaders used in the celebration at the end. The montage is fumbling and Zharki's scenario doesn't give Pudovkin half a chance.

Mother and Sons comes in a period when the picture industry in the Soviet Union is geared with the defense program. It is designed to boost the morale of the Soviet people facing the madmen at their borders, to reaffirm the cheerful, reliant sense of discipline among the Socialist masses. As such it does not come to us with immodest claims of being great art. There is plenty to be done immediately to ready the defenses of the USSR, and the movie industry has taken the lead by reminding the people of the interventionist days *(Ski Battalion, The Defense of Volochayevsk),* of the war plots of fascism *(If War Comes Tomorrow* and *In the Far East),* and the films about the triumphs of aviation *(At the North Pole* and *Mothers and Sons). Mothers and Sons* is a good picture in this group—and you mustn't miss Alexandrovskaya.

I'LL go completely overboard for the curtain-raiser at the Cameo—a four-reel film version of Chekhov's bravura comedy, *The Bear.* Zharov, who played the Czar's faithful aide in *Peter the First,* enacts the quixotic booze-fighter, Grigori Stepanovitch Smirnov, who comes to collect a gambling debt from Elena Ivanova Popova, the widow of an old crony. Chekhov can give lessons to the American playwrights who have been obsessed with "screwball" people. The zanies of czarist Russia provided Chekhov with the material of tragi-comedy, not, as our dramatists have done with a similar class in America, material for a series of daffy gags and shallow political soliloquies. Androvskaya as the widow and Zharov play it with the stops full out and I, for one, thoroughly enjoyed this welcome change from the underplaying of most films. It is acting with bombastic assurance and yet never crude or thoughtless.

CHICO with no piano and Harpo with no harp, even (alack!) no blondes, would seem to doom the new Marx brothers' extravaganza, *Room Service.* Tain't so, for the excellent farce by John Murray and Allen Boretz has enough stuff in it to cow even the ebullient Marx boys. They haven't done a thing to Groucho except give him a plot—a very suspenseful farce plot because it is built on economics. The adventures of a chiseling producer trying to bring his play to the boards without money beats love all hollow as the apprehensive element of farce. Once you've swallowed the shock that the junior Marxes are working without their usual props, you will enjoy this volume of the Marxes' work as much as its predecessors. Groucho is funny enough as Gordon Miller, the shoestring producer in danger of losing his shoestring, to make you wish his brothers would get out of the way and retire to a place on the Marx managerial staff along with the unlamented Zeppo. Harpo's few laughs come from funny props, a rueful note from this wild mime. Morrie Ryskind has adapted the play well, adding a comical scene from the phony "proletarian" play Groucho is nestling. The original members of the George Abbott company well-nigh steal the fillum as well. It's Marxist revisionism—that's what it is—but a delightful perversion indeed. JAMES DUGAN.

Young Social Artists

MICHAEL GILLEN, Herbert Kallem, Morris Shulman, Henry Kallem, and Morris Neuwirth are the five original members of an artists' group which (according to Philip Evergood's foreword) "may enlarge later to include more painters like themselves." This is good news; for the work they are showing at the ACA Gallery is good work, and to have more of it cemented with the cohesiveness of a common idea will be splendid.

Skeptics ask, "What is social art and what is a social artist?" Despite their scorn, the fact is that social art and the social artist express very definite concepts about life and the relation of art to life. Some answers will be made to the questions at the symposium of artists and critics to be held at the gallery the night

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of September 23. But the best answers are to be found in studying the work of those painters and sculptors who profess themselves to be social artists, making social art.

In the case of the five young men now exhibiting, this is a pleasant task; for the level of quality is high, and the mood in which they work buoyant and hopeful. Not that their themes are Pollyanna; by no means. A *Collective Kitchen* into which seven persons are crowded, with baby crawling on the floor; or *Cellar Flat* in which the bathtub stands in the middle of the kitchen floor, unadorned and totally lacking privacy; crowded city parks; a mother nursing her baby on a tenement roof, naked baby and bared breast exposed to the sun *(Sun Bathing—East Side Style)*; a prison dining room—these are the subjects the artists have chosen to depict.

Now these themes are certainly not the "monumental memory of other things" which academic and pseudo-classical art is. They are out of life, direct and painful visions, facts terrible in their impact. They represent unmistakable death, the death of potential human life, the slow starving of potential talent, the strangulation of longed-for happiness. They are the bitter reality of our time.

But when these young painters and sculptors take these terrible themes for art, they do so not in the spirit of one who rolls a morsel of tragedy on his tongue, but rather as one who sees the tragedy and vows it shall not recur. Before society can be cleansed of this living death, the human beings who make up society and by whose willed and united action society can be remade must know bitterly and fully the depths of their tragic plight. It is this pre-revolutionary phase of agitation that these artists present, as the mild hero of Mann's *Magic Mountain,* Hans Castorp, represented living death in a tuberculosis sanitarium from which he emerged for the struggle and chaos of war, where actual physical death was more truly life than the waking dream of his previous existence.

Since this phase, though not the ultimate objective of our endeavor, is an essential part of the historic process, it has necessary meaning and, through meaning, beauty—as Hans Castorp found in the metempsychosis of his last act. In the paintings this beauty is evidenced in two ways: in the solid forms built from strong cube volumes and in the sensitive care for surface and texture of paint. In the sculptures, the same simple strength is felt in the fact that the forms are not distorted and tortured, not worked over in an anxious intellectualizing of the medium, but cut quite cleanly from their enveloping mass.

Two elements are fused in this approach, realistic concern for the subject and esthetic concern for the expression. It is to be seen that these men have studied their themes; at the same time they have studied their mediums. A real union of form and subject is beginning to appear in the work of progressive painters and sculptors. It is no accident that the most hopeful signs are seen among the social artists.

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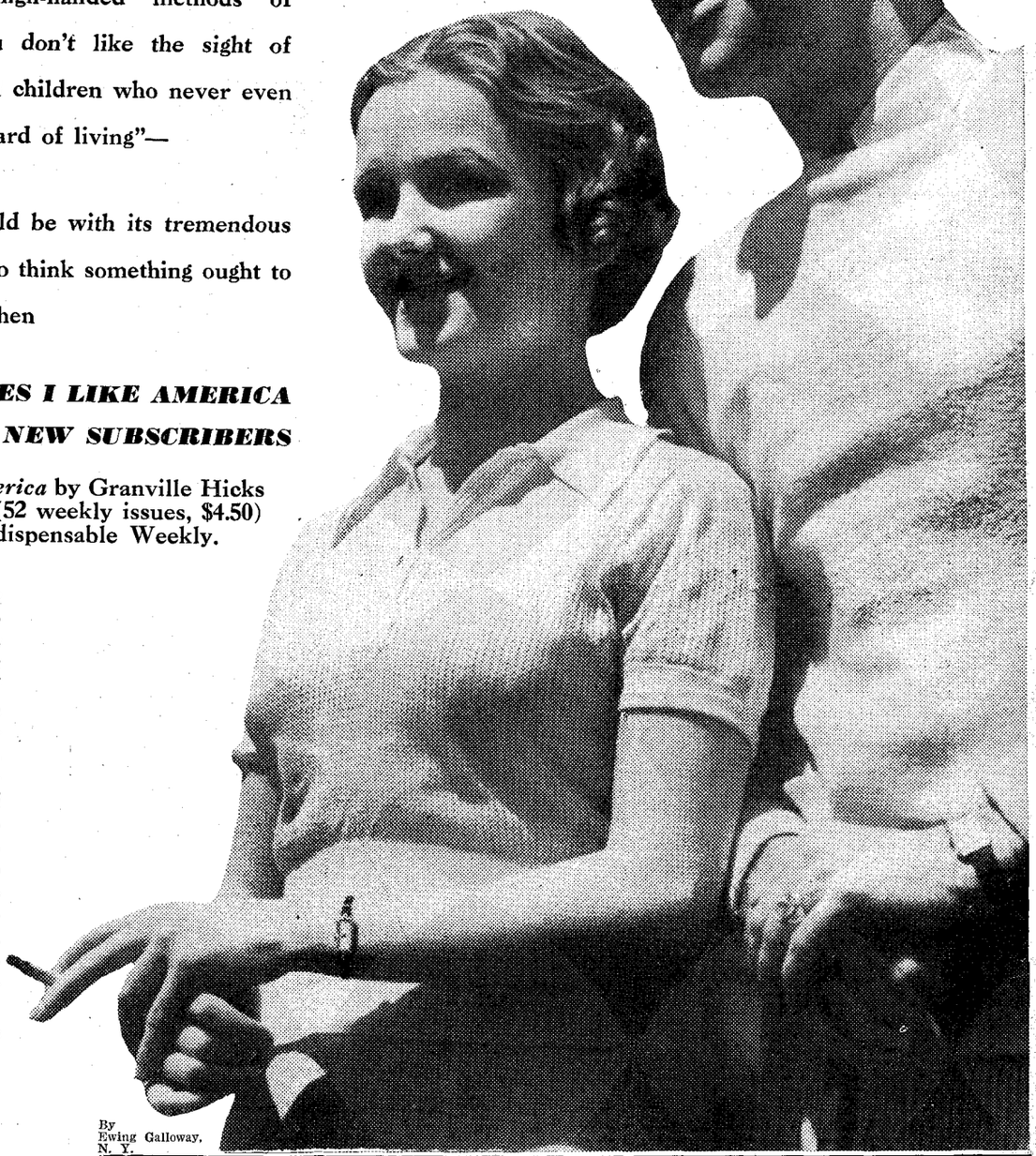

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